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THOMAS KENNETH.

[Copy testimonial from the late CAPTAIN WEBB.]

Adelphi Terrace, Strand, W., August 15th, 1875.

T. McDONALD, 61 Haymarket, W.

—I have much pleasure in hearing testimony to the wonder of your Porpoise Liver Oil, as also to your Porpoise Grease. I am glad to hear of the former during the course of my journey across the sea of it, as well as to the onward application of the Grease. I, in a great measure, owe the success of my venture, and am anxious to let you know. I will certainly not lose an

opportunity of making known to all my friends the excellence and virtue of your most powerful specific. I think it is incumbent on you, and a duty you owe to the public at large, to let them know by all means in your power the wonderful health-restoring remedy for all ailments you possess.—With many thanks for the service you have been to me, yours faithfully, M. WEBB.

Merrion Square, Dublin, June 3rd, 1884.

To Mr. McDONALD, 3 Rupert Street, London, W.

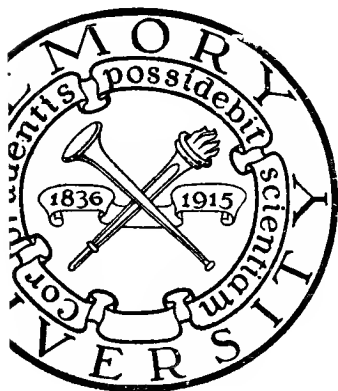
Sir,—I am much obliged for the half-gallon of Porpoise Liver Oil received this morning. My wife has been so much benefited by the quart you had previously sent, that she has ordered a larger supply this time, as she intends giving some to the children. I am thankful to say she sleeps better and eats better, and has gained a considerable amount in weight; her cough is very much better, and the blood-spitting has ceased. I forgot to tell you that her father died of consumption at the age of thirty years. My wife desires me to thank you —I remain, yours obediently, H. J. FITZGERALD.

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I'll none of it."—*Shakespeare.*

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INCOGNITA

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A Tale of Love and Passion

BY THE AUTHOR OF

SKITTLES—LEFT HER HOME—ANNIE—DELILAH—KATE HAMILTON—
THE LADY DETECTIVE—THE BEAUTIFUL DEMON—ANONYMA—
SKITTLES IN PARIS—LOVE FROLICS OF A YOUNG SCAMP—
AGNES WILLOUGHBY—FORMOSA—THE SOILED DOVE.



LONDON: CHARLES HENRY CLARKE,
7 GOUGH SQUARE, FLEET STREET.

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INCOGNITA



CHAPTER I.

"ON THE RUINS."

It is not probable that many people have explored the intricacies, the hidden depths and recesses, of Victoria Street. It is a desolate, a gloomy, an uninviting thoroughfare. Even the new station of the Metropolitan or Underground Railway has not enlivened it to any great extent. Certainly the passengers going to and fro take away the idea of its being an uninhabited region, or a Tom Tiddler's ground, or a no-man's land. Yet, if you penetrate a little beyond the wooden structure dignified by the name of a terminus, the roof of which is liable at any moment to be lifted up by the force of an explosive boiler, and thrown in a decided manner upon the devoted head of the unoffending pedestrian, you once more see the extent of wilderness, which gives you a fair idea of a Sahara, in the midst of which the ruined remains of Thebes or Memphis are just visible above the sand, which has, through the lapse

and power of ages, nearly succeeded in obliterating all trace of the former magnificent greatness of those Cities of the Plain. The Clerkenwell Sessions House, to the far right of you, looms heavily in the distance ; and the blue-coated policemen, minimised by the distance, look like a swarm of exaggerated Brobdignagian buzzing bottle-flies hovering around a dead carcass which has been condemned as unfit for human food in the market of Newgate, hard by. To the left, as you pass the station, you may perceive, if you choose to use the eyes with which a beneficent Nature has in its prodigality endowed you, a number of short brick-walls, in a lamentable state of unfinish, underneath which are vaults, intended as coal-cellars and the like when the houses, the foundations of which only are as yet in existence, are completed. These walls, these masses of brick-work, ungainly, yet in some sense colossal—these vaults funereal, ghostly in the darkness, Adelphi arches in miniature—are popularly known as “the Ruins.” Here the betting fraternity, from the Hyde-Park leviathan to the Bride-Lane and Haymarket welcher, are accustomed to assemble. Here the odds are settled with the precision of the quotations on the Stock Exchange, or the regularity of Tattersall’s subscription-room. Wright’s “tissue” is looked for with a feverish eagerness ; and the sporting world is amply and, I may say, ably represented. Sporting publicans, and tradesmen who cannot spare the time, or do not wish to be seen “on the Ruins,” send a friend, and “put their money on” by deputy. The police do not attempt to interfere with the fre-

quenters of "the Ruins;" and very properly, for they do no harm, and are not in the way, as they are in Bride Lane or Panton Street. Bank-notes on settling-days on this racing exchange are as plentiful as blackberries; and the only astonishment of the uninitiated spectator is, that the man in a loud but rather seedy suit of "dittoes," who does not look as if he could boast the possession of a solitary five-pound note in the world, is able to take five or six hundred sovereigns' worth of "tissue" from a greasy-looking pocket-pook and "hand them over;" for he is noted for "paying down on the nail." O neophyte, that is Davis; and that beside him is Johnston—he with the coal-black eyes, and the beard and the whiskers; and that again is Reynolds;—all leviathans, every man Jack of them,—all Tritons swimming amongst the minnows, and devouring them by their superior sagacity and (almost) unlimited command of capital. They are all in a high state of feather. An outsider has won the Guineas and the Chester Cup, so they have landed a "pot," and are singing a "jubilate" in consequence. They will line off whitebait at Greenwich or else Blackwall. To-morrow the turtle and salmon of Richmond will tickle their palates. Oh! I warrant you, they know how to live, these leviathans. That one with the velvet coat and the Bedford cords stands to win fifteen thousand on the Derby: a good deal, mind you, for a man who frequents "the Ruins." Champagne is the ambrosia which inspires them; it sinks down their throats like bottled velvet, and is productive of ideas. Davis will tell you that he cannot afford

to drink beer. Cannot afford! Yes, he is right he cannot afford to do it. Beer makes his brain muddy. Champagne clears it, elates it, makes it elastic, fecund, pregnant with great ideas and gigantic projects. The Star and Garter at Richmond elevates his ideas, and sublimates him. It is a relaxation for perpetual thought and everlasting calculation.

It was the fifteenth of May, about a week or ten days before the Derby. Immense excitement reigned amongst the ranks of the sporting community, the members of which had assembled in force on the Ruins. The sun was shining brightly, as it usually does about Whitsuntide; and even the Ruins looked less sepulchral than was their wont. The betting-men, leviathans and minnows, stood in their favourite places. Each book-maker was surrounded by a little knot of friends—or customers, as those desirous of booking a bet with him may be called. They were, for the most part, smoking, talking, shouting, and gesticulating. One man in particular claimed attention, not only from his gentlemanly appearance, but from the classic cut of his face and the regularity of his features. He was well dressed. He was known by the name of Gentleman Barton. The jewelry he wore was expensive but not showy. He wore a horse-shoe pin, studded with diamonds, upon which any pawnbroker would have lent him forty pounds, had he deposited it as security for the loan. A diamond sparkled on his finger; and his watch-chain was of the large-link pattern which the Prince of Wales made fashionable some years ago. He was

neither a leviathan nor a minnow ; he was between the two. By his side was a man known as Dick Stoffles. Dick was the unluckiest fellow that ever addicted himself to racing pursuits. If he backed a horse, that horse was morally certain to lose. No matter how "good" he might be, or in what favour he was in, he was sure to come in with the "ruck." Yet Dick Stoffles invariably paid when he lost any money ; and as no one had, from the earliest time when Dick put in an appearance on the Ruins, ever seen him win one single penny-piece, the universal wonder was, how he got his money. He did not look like a capitalist. He had not the savour of money about him, or the ring of the true metal. Dick was a mystery, and no one could make him out. He was a stout man, of a year or two on the wrong side of forty, with rather a florid, bloated face, which spoke of deep potations ; and spoke truly, for Dick was what his friends called "a soaker" and a "Lushington." He wore a suit of shooting clothes, made of light-gray cloth ; and a watch and chain, together with a ring on his finger ; while another, set with a fine cameo, confined his blue-and-white spotted neck-tie. He was in conversation with Gentleman Barton. They were both smoking,—Barton a cigar, Dick Stoffles a meerscham.

"I hear some of the fellows are on Gone Away," exclaimed Gentleman Barton.

Dick Stoffles uttered an exclamation of deep disgust, and said, "No good at all."

"Why not?"

"Nothing but a rasher of wind."

"She will run pounds heavier than she is at present."

"I don't care ; she's no good."

This emphatic declaration was considered by Dick Stoffles conclusive. Gentleman Barton was about to continue the conversatiou, when a mau made his appearance with a string of ballads in his hand. He was attired shabbily ; and yet, in spite of his rags, his face wore a jovial expression, bespeaking a witty and hilarious nature, which defies poverty to subdue it or starvatiou and hardship to extinguish it. He went by the name of Joe the Patterer, and often enlivened the party at the Ruins by his staves ; for which he was geuerally rewarded in a substantial manuer,—betting-men, as a rule, being good-natured and generous whether in or out of luck. Joe the Patterer halted close to where Gentleman Barton and Dick Stoffles were standing, and, holding out his ballads, made as if he were going to sing.

"Got any thing new, Joe ?" asked Dick Stoffles.

"Something about the Darby, gov'nor," was the reply.

"That's your sort, then. Fire away."

In a monotonous voice, the possessor of which was utterly ignorant of the art of modulation, Joe the Patterer began to sing a ballad called "The Darby." It was received with great applause ; and at the conclusion, Joe sold as many as two dozen copies. It consisted of six verses, in the old-fashioned 8-7 metre. He waved his hand as he spoke, as if he had a great idea of action.

"ON THE RUINS."

"THE DARBY.

THE Darby is a-coming on,
A-coming safe as 'ouses,
And with it comes 'xciting scenes
That all the 'fancy' rouses.

Each betting-man that knows a thing,
A thing or two worth knowing,
Is 'sweet' on some partik'lar hoss
As knows the trick of going.

With books well 'posted up' they go,
In drags and traps, to Epsom ;
In 'buses, shays, in carts and drays,
And four-wheeled cabs, 'xcep' some,

Who take the train, as being cheap
And saving of the rhino.
But the road for me, it is a spree—
By jingo! ain't it fine, oh !

And when the race is lost, and won
By a thundering rank outsider,
We wonder who the ' Oaks' will win,
And—who's a-going to ride her.

Oh ! going back to town again,
We cotton to the missis,
For champagne makes both young and old
Uncommon fond of kisses.

The Darby is a-coming on,
A-coming safe as 'ouses,
And with it comes 'xciting scenes
That all the 'fancy' rouses."

Gentleman Barton laughed ; and, taking a shilling from his pocket, placed it on his thumb-nail flicking it off in Joe's direction.

"You'll do, Joe," he said.

"Thank you, master; thank you kindly," said Joe, upon whom the gratuities began to rain almost as quickly as he could pick them up, from the splendid shilling to the dusky brown.

"I must learn that song," said Dick Stoffles. "I rather like it:—'We wonder who will win the Oaks, and—who's a-going to ride her.' It ain't half bad, is it?"

"Not at all. I think Grub Street's improving," replied Gentleman Barton, with a covert sneer, which passed unnoticed by his less polished companion.

Joe the Patterer passed on to another group, and was equally well received. He seemed to be a general favourite.

Dick Stoffles replenished his pipe; and holding the ballad he had bought outstretched in his hands, conned it over with great apparent satisfaction. Gentleman Barton soon roused him from his occupation.

"I have something against you, I think," he said.

"Very likely," replied Stoffles a little surlily; "most of you have. There never was such an unlucky beggar in this world as me."

"It's no good growling over spilled milk. The luck 'll change some day."

"I wish it would. It had better make haste if it means to, or else I'm blowed if it won't be too late."

"Why's that?" asked Barton, with his pencil between his teeth, turning over the leaves of his betting-book.

"Why! Oh, nothing much: only the odds are, I shall be dead and buried. There isn't a man going that wouldn't have broken down under it before now."

"It doesn't seem to lessen the coin, though," said Gentleman Barton, with a sly smile.

Dick made no answer to this. He lighted his pipe, and puffed at it sullenly.

"Here we are," cried Barton, having hit upon the entry he wished to meet with.

"What is it?"

"Fifteen to one twice over about Touch Me Not."

"What for?"

"The Guineas."

"Haven't I settled that yet?"

"It doesn't look like it," replied Gentleman Barton.

Dick Stoffles put his hand into his waistcoat-pocket and took out some notes; he turned them over to see the amount, having previously wetted his finger to enable him to do so with greater facility, and then detached some from the heap, giving them to Gentleman Barton, who took them with a mild "thank you," and placed them, along with several others, in his pocket-book.

"That's the way I've got to 'part' every blessed settling-day," said Stoffles savagely. "If so be that I wasn't made up of a mixture of cast-iron and leather, with a bit or two of adamant shied in, I must have gone under. Why, it's more nor enough to break a bloke's heart, it is, by G—, Barton."

"I'm sorry for you, old boy ; but I can't help it."

"No ; I didn't say you could,—did I?" he returned angrily.

"No, of course not," said Gentleman Barton equably.

"Have you pretty nigh done?" asked Dick Stoffles.

"Almost. I was waiting for a man, but he has not put in an appearance. I shall leave word for him, and if he doesn't pay up, I shall post him as a defaulter. I think I'll go now,—what do you say?"

"I'm game."

"Very well. I'll just speak a word to Davis, and I'll be with you."

Gentleman Barton went away, and Dick Stoffles blew a cloud of smoke that Rip van Winkle could scarcely have equalled. He was apparently very much put out.

He was soon joined by his friend, who said :

"Where shall we go?"

"Got any business in the Park?" asked Stoffles.

"No."

"Then we'd better go to the usual place, I suppose."

"The Bell?"

Stoffles nodded his head, and the two men walked down Farringdon Street, in the direction of the Old Bell, in Fleet Street.

CHAPTER II.

FANNY CARRUTHERS.

IN an old-fashioned crescent leading up into the Vauxhall-Bridge Road lived a lady who was called Fanny Carruthers. Her Christian name might have been Fanny, although that is extremely problematical. It might have been Cinderella, or Goody Two-Shoes, or Bluebeard's wife; but she was always called Fanny. Carruthers was certainly an assumed name; for only a month before her letters had been addressed to Mrs. Whitehead, and a short time before that she was spoken of by the postman—a man of discrimination, and much respected on his beat—as Mrs. Holland. How long the euphemistic name of Carruthers would continue to delight this lady—who was fickle in the matter of nomenclature—was a question for the philologist. The crescent in which Mrs. Carruthers lived was, as I have said, a little antiquated. If you might judge by its appearance, there was no clause in the lease which compelled you, under pains and penalties, to paint and decorate at the expiration of every three years. The plaster and the stucco and the paint were in the habit of peeling off, and hanging on the bricks in crisp curly shapes, like dried leaves when they are sear and yellow, just before they fall in autumn and leave the paternal bough bare and desolate. The flowers in the windows had a mangy appearance, as if they wanted a change of air and a little brimstone and treacle. The birds of the air—such as sparrows—

had made their nests in the gutter-pipes ; and the drains on the roof were stopped up, which caused the sooty water to overflow its duct, and rush down the grimy walls in a dirty stream, adding much to the appearance of the houses in wet weather, making them resemble inanimate zebras — all stripes on a white ground. The little bits of garden in front of some of the houses were the most hideous mockeries of horticulture and floriculture that ever were seen. There was the round bed in the centre, in which the stunted laurel did not flourish ; a path intervened between this and the rest of the enclosure, in which a few wall-flowers, labouring under a heavy weight of blight, tried in vain to open their sickly buds. A stunted tiger-lily reared its many-leaved stem into the foggy air, and uttered a feeble protest against the smoke and noise of the neighbouring London, Chatham, and Dover Railway Station. How was it possible for a flower to bloom under such adverse circumstances, or even to blush unseen ? The very sweeps, as they went by with their melancholy notes sticking in their fog-clogged throats, halloed shudderingly at the chimneys of the crescent. Such forbidding chimneys as they were ! I'll be bound they were not swept more than once a year, " kitchen" into the bargain. Sixpence for sweeping such chimneys choke full of soot, the accumulation of twelve months ! No, thank you, muttered the sweeps—those sable ministers of our will ; and they held their breath and ran on quickly, lest some one might pounce upon them incontinently, and drag them into the house, and say unto them, " Sweep, or"—the

penalty is too dreadful to find utterance even in print. The subterranean region in the crescent looked in hot weather like the den of some Cyclops (who was it that painted a Cyclops with two eyes for the R.A. ?) who had a quantity of work to get through within a given time. The man who came along the road in a light cart—that man who had an unctuous, not to say greasy appearance—who lightly descends into your area and shouts “B’cher !” laying a strong stress upon the last syllable—left the ordered lamb or the bespoke mutton with a compassionate air, as if he had his doubts about its “keeping” in so close and confined an atmosphere.

The “keow”—that is to say, the “milk”—never troubled himself about the freshness of his wares ; for he opined that they would go sour in a very short time when once within the precincts of the crescent. In point of fact, he always put more size, and more sheeps’ brains, and more *aqua pura* in the can for the crescent than for any other can—“Just to make it keep,” he said.

The crescent had a facility for collecting mud and dust which was very remarkable. It was accustomed—the dust—to collect upon the door-steps, and to hide away in corners, and to penetrate through the window-frames, and creep under the kitchen-door, saving the cook the trouble of sanding the floor. The water-cart men never visited the crescent ; they had given it up years ago. The contractor told the vestry as plainly as he could that it would ruin him, and send him into the *Gazette*, if they expected him to “lay the crescent ;” and the vestry having

an intimate acquaintance with the locality in question, —two of the churchwardens having lived there in former times, before their olive-branches grew up around them,—did not press the question. If you spoke to a mudmonger respecting the crescent, he would laugh in your face. They always gave it a wide berth. “*Their* carts wouldn’t hold the crescent mud—no, not if they went forty times a day. It worn’t like no other kind o’ mud.” And so they left it alone. Cats would not live in the crescent; and, strange to say, it was not even the paradise of curs.

When you penetrated to the interior—always supposing you were sufficiently bold to do so—you found every thing in the same old-world type. There was an old-world landlady, who wore an old-world wig, old-world dresses and brooches and caps, old-world spectacles, and took old-world snuff. The furniture was old-world, and so was the oil-cloth in the passages, which was so well worn that you could not distinguish the pattern; and there was an old-world parrot, who seemed to be suffering from lung disease, which made him talk in an old-world way, his accent being decidedly ante-Victorian. The old-world landlady would say that she was “oblegged to you,” and hoped you liked the “quality” of her furniture—pronouncing the “al” as short as she could.

There was, however, one brilliant exception to all this old-worldliness, and that was Mrs. Carruthers. There was nothing antediluvian about her—not a bit of it. She always looked as if she had just come out of a bandbox, and was “spick and span new.”

She was young also — hardly three-and-twenty. What induced her, then, to select the crescent as a desirable locality to live in ? That is first answered by a shrug of the shoulders, which implies that ladies who are “Incognita”—that is, unrecognised and unknown in good society—experience some little difficulty at times in finding a place where they can “find rest for the soles of their feet.” This remark is biblical, and therefore must not be criticised.

Fanny Carruthers, on the morning of the day on which Gentleman Barton and Dick Stoffles met “on the Ruins,” sat alone in her drawing-rooms, for which she paid three guineas a week—quite enough, in all conscience ; but vice is always more heavily taxed than virtue. She was engaged in a congenial occupation, but one which was rather discreditable to so young a woman. Two phials stood on the table before her. One contained logwood ; the other was filled with nitre. She was concocting liquid rouge. While she was thus engaged, a knock was heard at the door. It was evident that some one had called upon her. A quarter of a minute elapsed, when an old-world servant poked her head in at the door, and exclaimed :

“Are you at home, miss ?”

“Who is it ?” asked Fanny.

“Don’t know, miss.”

“Then, you fool, why don’t you go and look ?”

The old-world servant departed, and might have been seen peeping through the front-parlour window. In the mean time the knock sounded a second time, more imperiously and louder. The old-world ser-

vant rushed impetuously to the drawing-room again, poked her head in, and said :

“ All right, miss.”

“ Who is it ?” demanded Fanny persistently.

“ Mr. Carruthers, miss.”

“ Oh, say I’m at home.”

She did not desist from her employment, nor did she attempt to remove either the logwood or the nitre. She was a strong-minded woman, and it was much more trouble to her to conceal any thing than to tell a man, “ If he didn’t like it, he might go.”

Mr. Carruthers entered the room. He was a young man, three-and-twenty at the most, well and fashionably dressed. He was smoking. With characteristic extravagance, he kept his Hansom at the door while his interview with Fanny lasted. He had been in the army ; but owing to a disagreement with the colonel of the regiment, he sold out. He was very well off, and in all respects his own master. He went straight up to Fanny, who held up her face to be kissed. When she was satisfied in that respect, she said :

“ Sit down ; I will talk to you presently. You can amuse yourself with your smoke for a few minutes, I suppose ?”

“ What are you doing ?”

“ Can’t you see ?”

“ Not very well,” he replied.

“ Oh, I’m making some liquid rouge.”

“ Rouge ? What nonsense, Fanny ! You will only ruin your complexion,” he exclaimed rather impatiently.

"Oh, no, I sha'n't. I'm not a fool, old fellow. Sometimes, when I've been up the best part of the night, I want something to put a little bloom on my face. Besides, the stuff I'm making can't do one much harm. It isn't a bit worse than 'splash,' which all you men put on when you are going out at night."

Mr. Carruthers laughed, and said :

"You are determined to have your own way, as usual. There is something for you."

As he spoke, he threw a little box upon the table. It contained jewelry, by the look of it.

"Is that for me?" she said, her eyes sparkling at the prospect of a present.

He nodded his head.

Fanny took up the box, opened it eagerly, and a pair of earrings was displayed.

"Earrings!" she ejaculated, while a shade of displeasure crossed her countenance.

"Yes. Are you disappointed?"

"Very much."

"Why?—tell me."

"They are no use to me, because I've got no holes in my ears," she replied, in a lugubrious voice.

"'Pon my word, I'm very sorry. Have you really never had your ears pierced?"

"Never in my life."

"You surprise me."

"Can you change them for something else?" said Fanny.

"I dare say I can; but why not have your ears bored?"

"It will hurt me."

"Not a bit. I saw my sister's ears done a few days ago, and she said it did not hurt her a bit."

"I shouldn't like to try it," she said.

"Are you afraid? What a little coward you must be!"

"So a woman ought to be. You wouldn't have me a great big Amazon, would you, that would fight and kick, and go on?"

"I think you are sufficiently well armed already."

"With what?"

"Your tongue."

"Oh, that's an old joke. I should be ashamed to use it. It is something like the puns at the Strand Theatre—rather Joe Millerish."

"Let me do your ears for you, Fanny dear?" asked Carruthers.

"You won't hurt me, Brudie?" (his name was Brudinel Carruthers, and she called him Brudie).

"Not for the world."

"What will you do it with?"

"My scarf-pin."

"Well, do one first," she said.

"Of course I shall. You don't suppose I shall do both at once? I haven't got a machine."

"How stupid you are! You know what I mean," said Fanny. "If you chaff me, you shall not do it at all."

Carruthers took out his scarf-pin, and going up to Fanny, pinched her ear between his finger and thumb till he numbed it; then he pushed the

pin through the fleshy part. Fanny did not seem to feel any pain.

"Did it hurt?" he asked, as he put his handkerchief up to stop the slight bleeding which had commenced.

"Not exactly; I hardly felt it," replied Fanny. "Do the other quickly, and then I will wash them in salt and water."

Carruthers began the second operation, but was not nearly so successful. It is impossible to say whether he blundered over it, or whether that ear was more sensitive than the other; but Fanny uttered a cry, and ran away with the pin sticking in her ear. She had gained the door, and was half-way up the staircase before he could stop her. He threw himself into an arm-chair and laughed. Some minutes elapsed before Fanny returned. When she did, she exclaimed:

"Oh, you brute! I'll have you up before the Royal Humane Society."

"What for," he asked, "cruelty to animals?"

Fanny evidently had rather vague ideas about societies of an eleemosynary nature.

"Yes; look at my ears."

"In order to make it cruelty to animals, ought not the ear to have been a little longer?"

"You are a beast, that's all I know," was the gracious reply.

"It is, I hope, some slight condonation of the offence to be in any way, however remote, connected with such a beauty as yourself."

"You had better give the beauty some money,

for she's hard up," replied Fanny carelessly, still holding the handkerchief to her ear.

"Come and rob me," he said. "I did not come altogether unsupplied."

Fanny felt in his waistcoat pocket, and discovered a cheque for fifty pounds, which she immediately appropriated.

"Where have you been?" she asked; "I haven't seen you for two days.

"That question reminds me that I heard of you," he replied rather gravely, placing his feet on the fender, and taking up the poker, with which he struck the bars of the grate monotonously. This was a sign that he was in a bad temper.

"Heard of *me*? When?"

"When do you suppose?"

"How *should* I be able to tell?"

"I don't know. You haven't forgotten where you've been, have you?"

"I won't say I've stuck in the house alone all day."

He smiled.

"I see you have something against me, Brudie," she continued. "Let's have it. I would rather you told me at once, instead of sulking."

"Some fellow I know told me you were at one of those night-places yesterday evening."

Instead of rushing into a long string of excuses or denials, Fanny sat down and replied coolly:

"Well, what of that?"

It was his turn to look surprised now.

"What of that?" she repeated.

"I am surprised that you should ask me," exclaimed Carruthers.

"You'll be surprised at a good many things before you have known me long. But you have not answered my question."

"I will when I have finished what I have to say."

"Make haste, then," she rejoined impatiently.

"I'm supposed to be keeping you, Fanny."

"It isn't much of a keep, certainly," she exclaimed, looking round her at the old-world room and the old-world furniture, and out of the window at the old-world road, and the old-world houses, and the old-world sparrows on the old-world tiles.

He took no notice of this remark, but continued :

"Several men who know me have seen us together ; and, as I said before, I am supposed to be keeping you."

"You seem rather proud of keeping a woman, old fellow. It's the first time you ever did such a thing, isn't it ?" said Fanny mockingly.

"Whether it is or not doesn't matter a bit. While I get the credit of keeping you, you ought to study me a little. I don't mean to insinuate for a moment that you do any thing wrong ; if I thought so, I should not be here now ; but it does not look well for you to be seen at those places."

"Have you finished ?" exclaimed Fanny

"Yes."

"All right. Now listen to me. Do you suppose that I am going to give up all my friends and

all my connections simply to please you ? I'm not half such a fool. *Do something* for me which will make me to a certain extent independent of you, and I don't care. But I have no claim upon you. You can throw me over to-morrow, if you take it into your head to do so. Don't you think I should be cutting my own throat, if I put myself in your power and forgot every body else ?"

Carruthers did not make any answer to these passionate remarks, which were delivered in a hasty manner ; he contented himself with knocking the poker against the bars in a stupid, monotonous manner.

"Can't you speak ?" she said.

"I only made the remarks I did, Fanny, because I have the greatest possible regard for you."

"And yourself," she put in.

"Possibly a little for myself ; but, at all events, no inconsiderable regard for you."

"Why don't you show it more strikingly ?"

"Perhaps I shall some day "

"The sooner the better. I hate waiting."

"How horribly prosaic you are, Fanny !"

"Yes ; it pays better than romance."

"Does it ? I should hardly have thought so."

"So you like me, old Brudie, do you ?" exclaimed Fanny.

"Very much," he replied feelingly.

"Don't you know that it is a great mistake to be too fond of a woman ?"

"I sometimes think that I cannot be too fond of you."

"Have you never been told," added Fanny, "that it is a mistake to be sentimental? A man ought never to allow his feelings to be engaged by any woman."

"What is he to do if he cannot help it?" asked Carruthers smilingly.

Fanny elevated her shoulders, and replied :

"I believe no one despises that sort of weakness more than women themselves."

"Do you despise it?" he said, looking up.

Fanny began to perceive that she had allowed her dissertation on the philosophy of the affections to carry her a little too far. So getting up, she walked over to Carruthers, and pulling his whiskers, said :

"No, darling ; not so long as you are kind to me."

He pressed her hand.

"Tell me," she resumed, "where you have been."

"Riding in a steeple-chase."

"Really?"

"Yes ; my name is in the paper to-day."

"Why did you not tell me, and take me with you?"

"Because I did not know it in time. It was a chase for gentleman jocks., and a man was taken ill all at once,—a man I know,—and he asked me to ride for him. I objected at first, because I thought of you ; and my life was not insured. It isn't jolly to break one's neck at three-and-twenty, is it?"

"I should think not. But you got well out of it?"

"Fortunately I did."

"And won it?"

"And won it in a canter."

Fanny complimented him on his skill, and went to the window. When she saw the cab, she exclaimed :

"Whose cab's that—yours?"

"Very likely ; I left one outside."

"What for?"

"Take me home, I thought," he replied.

"I don't think so," exclaimed Fanny determinedly. "I want to go somewhere to-night ; and if you want me not to 'show' alone, you had better take me out."

He made a virtue of necessity, and acquiesced. Holding out a sovereign, he said :

"Pay the fellow, and let him go."

"How much?"

"Oh, I don't know. What he asks."

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD BELL.

THE Old Bell is one of those places which deserve the name of "houses of call," for the entire business seemed to be done over the bar. No melodious potman was retained upon the premises to go about night and morning to collect the pewter measures, in which the fragrant ale is retailed to those who have a partiality for malt liquor and are afflicted

with thirst. It was here that Gentleman Barton and Stoffles found a temporary asylum. They sought a retired corner in a parlour, the ornamentation of which consisted chiefly of cobwebs, while the solitary window looked out upon the churchyard of St. Bride's. As the day was not very far advanced, they regaled themselves upon ale, purporting to be Scotch and to come from Edinburgh, but which in reality was brewed in the heart of the City of London, and not from "a peck o' maut" belonging to any Willie or Sandie north of the Tweed. Gentleman Barton "made the running" in the conversational line, and "pulled double;" while Dick Stoffles listened attentively, occasionally putting in a word or two, or making a remark which was called for by observations of his companion.

"You tell me," began Barton, "that you are tired of betting because you never have any luck."

"That's right enough," replied Dick.

"I don't know what your affairs are, nor do I want to know particularly. You always seem to have money,—at least, it is a fair presumption, because you always pay promptly when you lose; but even the purse of a Rothschild could not last for ever with drains made constantly upon it,—all going out and none coming in. So, if you were the fellow the heathens called Cræsus, you would have to sink some time or other."

Dick Stoffles smiled. His friend was trying to pump him. He saw through the transparent device. The sucker had been introduced into the well, but unfortunately the well turned out to be dry.

"Now if I could trust you, Dick, and I don't see exactly why I shouldn't, I could put you up to a thing that would make all our fortunes."

"Comp'ny?" suggested Dick.

"No, it isn't a company," returned Gentleman Barton, with great disdain. "I've no fondness for your company men,—I don't hold with them at all. You generally lose your money, and get worried out of your life with calls. None of your 'Universal Flying Machine and Patent Wings Company' for me. I wash my hands of the whole boiling of them."

"What's *your* plan, then?" inquired Dick Stoffles.

"I hardly know whether I have what you call a 'plan,'" responded the wily gentleman with whom Mr. Stoffles was conversing; "but I heard of something which might turn out to one's advantage. A friend of mine wants a certain article, and is prepared to pay for it."

"Why doesn't he get it himself?" asked Dick abruptly.

"Oh! well, you'd better ask him. You've a good stock of questions to-day."

"Questions easy to answer."

"Possibly. Always supposing you have the requisite knowledge, which, I must confess, I have not."

"There must be risk in it," exclaimed Dick Stoffles suspiciously.

"That is not altogether improbable. If you ask for my candid opinion, I should say it was more than likely."

"What's the other side of the picture?"

"Silvery—golden, if you like. Some hundreds are to be made without much danger."

"All down?"

"Well, I should not think so. It would be hardly fair to expect it; but I will ask if you wish it. Perhaps fifty pounds might be given as a 'sweet'ner' to start with."

"Let me know a little more about it," exclaimed Dick Stoffles.

"Of course our conversation is strictly private and confidential; not that I care particularly, as I am only the agent and go-between; but if the thing got talked of, it might spoil my pal."

"I shall not sell you," returned Dick Stoffles, looking his friend steadfastly in the face. "If I am not with you, I am not likely to let any thing out."

"Very well; on that understanding I am at liberty to talk to you. What my friend wants is a ream or two of paper."

"Paper!" echoed Dick Stoffles in amazement.

"Just a trifling amount."

"Oh!" suddenly cried Dick, "I tumble. It must have a certain water-mark, I suppose?"

"Quite so."

"And come from Stoke?"

"Right again."

"I can soon give an answer," said Dick, getting rather red in the face.

"Will you do it?" inquired Gentleman Barton a little anxiously.

"No!" said Dick in a loud tone, bringing his fist down on the table with great force.

"But I say; look here."

"You've got your answer."

"Well, one moment."

"Not a second."

"Don't be a fool."

"Not me," said Dick Stoffles, who got up from his chair and walked towards the door, which, just before he reached it, opened, and admitted a man who looked like a groom, but who was in some way connected with the place. He held in his hand a small piece of paper,—very thin and very transparent,—upon which sundry names and figures were written. Directly Dick Stoffles saw it, he exclaimed, "Give us hold," and snatched it from him. Gentleman Barton got up and looked over his shoulder. It was what is known in racing circles as Wright's "tissue." Upon the flimsy sheet were inscribed the names of the winning horses in all the races that had taken place that day. The news was authentic, because it was telegraphed from the spot under proper supervision.

Dick Stoffles uttered a curse, and let the paper fall to the ground. He had backed King of Utopia for a heavy stake to win the Grey de Wilton Plate at Radcliffe Races, and, with his usual luck, he had lost again. Grinding his teeth, he plunged his hands into his pockets, and left the Bell.

Gentleman Barton smiled grimly, and muttered, "So the King's nowhere: always thought so. Dick must have dropped a tidy sum over that: all the

better. I hope it will clean him out ; he will be all the more likely to listen to me."

Having no further business at the Bell, Barton sauntered slowly along Fleet Street until he came to an eating-house, which took his fancy from its extensive bill-of-fare, and turning in, ordered a dinner which did credit to his fastidious taste. This he washed down with tolerable Burgundy, and having paid his score, hailed a cab and drove to the Haymarket, where we shall have occasion to meet him again at a later hour.

Dick Stoffles walked along gloomily ; his thoughts were not of the most agreeable kind. He talked to himself occasionally, and phrases like "She must," "I'll make her," were audible. Strange to say, Dick Stoffles' steps took him in the direction of the old-world crescent in which Fanny Carruthers lived ; and yet more strange was it that he should stop at the door of the identical house that charmingly decisive young lady, whose morals were as accommodating as her lovely self, inhabited. The servant who came to the door seemed to know Dick by sight, if not by name ; and she said, in a gruff voice, "Oh, it's you ; come in." He did so, and was shown into a little old-world crib of a room, which held one comfortably, but was certainly not large enough for two. The process of swinging a cat there was not only out of the question, but altogether impossible. In a short time nothing but the tail of the unfortunate animal would have been in one's hand ; the head would have gone one way, the legs another, and the carcass in a third direction.

He waited some time,—it might have been five, more likely it was ten minutes,—and then Fanny Carruthers walked into the room, without uttering one of those conventional phrases whose ultimate object is to discover the state of your health, and ascertain whether it is salubrious or the reverse. She exclaimed gruffly, "What did I tell you the last time you were here?"

"I don't know; I've forgot," he stammered.

"Oh, you don't remember, eh? As your memory's so defective, I'll just wake it up a bit. I told you as distinctly as I could that you would never get another halfpenny out of me, and it was no good your coming to try it on. You have had a mint of money out of me as it is, and I'm getting tired of the game."

"Only this time," said Dick Stoffles in a pleading voice.

"Only this time!" she repeated, with a curl of her well-cut lip, which was indicative of ineffable disgust,—“that's what you always say. It's always 'only this time' with you. I hate such poltroons of men. Why don't you do something for yourself, instead of coming sponging upon me?"

"I've lost a lot of money, Fanny."

"Of course you have; when haven't you?"

"I know I'm very unlucky," expostulated Dick Stoffles, with his eyes on the ground, as if he were morally afraid of the woman before him.

"Luck be hanged," cried Fanny; "that's all nonsense. You're a big fool, you mean. Say *that*, and you won't be far off the truth."

"But I say, my girl," began Dick.

"Now don't you venture on any familiarity with me," said Fanny Carruthers.

"I'm your FATHER," he exclaimed grandly, as if he had reserved his best shot until the last.

Father and daughter ! They meet under somewhat singular circumstances, and the scene that must inevitably take place between them promises to be rather amusing, if not instructive. The father is a betting-man, and has, up to the present time, extracted money from his daughter to pay his "debts of honour." Growing tired of a pastime the interest of which is all one-sided, as well as the profit, the daughter refuses any longer to be the banker of her speculative parent. The daughter was—what shall we say?—objected to by strait-laced people, rather clever in her way, and evidently more than a match for her father.

"My father !" she exclaimed. "Yes, you are ; and worse luck for me. What sort of a father have you been to me ? What good have you ever done me ?"

"We won't go into all that, Fanny," said Mr. Stoffles mildly.

"Why won't we ?" she returned almost fiercely ; "what's to prevent my saying what I like ?—not you, certainly."

A mocking laugh resounded through the crib of a room, and made the old-world flies in the old-world window start up and buzz away as if their very lives were in danger.

Dick Stoffles did not like his daughter to laugh

in that manner; he knew she was in a bad temper when she did.

"I only want a pony, Fanny. I backed a horse to win at Radcliffe, and he lost. Only a pony, Fanny."

"Not a rap, I tell you."

"If I don't pay, I can't bet any more. You'll cut me out of my profession."

"So much the better."

"What can I do?"

"Go 'bus driving, or something. Get an honest living like an honest man."

This remark, combined with Fanny Carruthers' repeated refusal to give him the money he asked for, seemed to inflame Mr. Stoffles and make him angry.

"I don't think you've much call to talk about honesty," he said a little spitefully.

"Oh! Fortunately it doesn't matter very much what you think; but it is remarkably fatherly of you to tell a daughter what she is when you drove her to it. It is of very little consequence, though. One thing's plain: you will never—*never*—get any thing again from me; and so you may do what you like."

Mr. Stoffles thought for a short space of time, and then said, "Fanny?"

"Well?"

"Help me over this stile, and I will never ask you any more."

"I dare say not—till next time."

"Just this once, Fanny."

"I tell you, I won't. Do you suppose I pick

money up in the streets? If I am a loose woman, I have to talk and go about to get what money I do. It is all very fine to talk about being gay; but it isn't every woman, I can tell you, who is able to get a living at it. There must be some cleverness about them, and they must be as strong as young lions to stand the wear and tear, the everlasting racket, of such a life."

Dick Stoffles seemed moved at this speech. He passed his hand over his forehead, as if bitter memories were crowding on his brain, and looming visions passing before his eyes, which he would fain shut out. But the stern reality of life soon forced itself upon him again, and he said, "So you won't do it, Fanny?"

"No," was the stern, uncompromising reply.

"You'll drive me to something."

"Oh, you won't threaten me; I know you too well."

"Never mind; we won't argue the point. If a man can't get money one way, he must get it another."

"Work for your living."

"I don't know how," he replied gloomily.

"That betting business will be the ruin of you," said Fanny.

"I believe you, girl," he cried; "you never spoke a truer word. It will, that and other things. Good by; I don't bear any ill-will towards you, Fanny."

He caught her hand and squeezed it, afterwards leaving the room, and letting himself out at the front-door.

Fanny Carruthers indulged in a soliloquy. "I could have lent him some money to-morrow morning when I get the cheque Brudie gave me changed. But why should I? Why should I go without things just because he wants to pay money he has lost in betting? I don't see it. If it were intended to set him up in some trade, it would be a different thing."

Dick Stoffles went away in the state of mind in which Gentleman Barton wished to see him. It would be a hazardous thing to answer for Dick's integrity if Barton meets him.

Fanny went up-stairs again. Carruthers was still lying on the sofa smoking. To him Fanny:

"Are you ready for some dinner, Brudie? I am."

"I don't mind," he replied languidly.

"You are not game to take me to Blackwall?" he said.

"Why not?"

"Will you?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"What shall I wear?" asked Fanny.

"Put on a muslin, wear your quilted blue-silk bonnet, and tie a sash of the same colour round your waist."

"I think I will," replied Fanny. "You're improving; your taste is not so bad as it used to be. Who have you seen dressed like that?"

"No one. It is my own idea."

"Originality of invention is always admirable."

"Rather a trite remark, and slightly worn," he answered, with a yawn.

The remark was unheard by Fanny, for that

impulsive young lady had left the room, and was busily engaged in dressing herself,—that most important operation in which a woman can at any time embark. Carruthers continued to smoke and sip some brandy pawnee until she returned.

“Shall I do?” she asked, turning round before him.

“Very nice indeed.”

“Where’s the cab?”

“How should I know?”

“Haven’t you sent for one?”

“No ; never told me to.”

“How I hate a fool !” exclaimed Fanny, raising her eyes.

“Shouldn’t have hurried my fellow away. Horse would have been all the better for standing.”

Fanny rang the bell angrily, and sent the old-world servant for a Hansom. It came ; they entered it.

“Where to, sir ?” said the driver.

“Blackwall.”

The man touched his hat.

Carruthers lighted a fresh cigar, and Fanny smiled as if she had already forgotten her father and his modest request.

CHAPTER IV.

MILLY.

GENTLEMAN BARTON was one of those versatile geniuses who shine in whatever society they happen to find themselves. He could have behaved with propriety at a Prime Minister's, and have done the duty of chairman or toastmaster at a sweep's *réunion* on the first of May, when those darkish-skinned individuals, who are always under a cloud of soot, are popularly supposed to disport themselves around a Maypole, and make merry with pandean pipes, and an absurd institution, derived from pastoral times, which they call Jack-in-the-Green, though nobody seems to be very clear as to why Jack got into the green, or what advantage, material or otherwise, he expected to derive from so unusual a proceeding.

Mr. Barton did not at all despair of winning Dick Stoffles over to his own way of thinking. He was like a judicious angler, who always gives his fish plenty of line, lest the monster of the deep, with his leviathan strength, should object to the insertion of the hook in his nose, and break the slender tackle of the humble disciple of Izaak Walton, piscator. He knew that Stoffles was in want of money,—a very frequent complaint of his ; and he was also aware that his recent heavy losses would have the effect of crippling him entirely, unless by some extraordinary fortune, he contrived to pick up from a hundred to two hundred pounds.

Where was he to get so much money? Barton

thought the matter over, and replied mentally, "Nowhere."

Stoffles was, to employ the expressive if not elegant phraseology of the Ruins, "on the mouching caper;" that is, he was willing to get what he could out of any one he met with.

This was what Mr. Barton called a chalk in his favour; and he felt sure that four-and-twenty hours would not pass over without his seeing something of Dick Stoffles. When he left the Old Bell he walked a little distance, and then got up outside an omnibus which was going to the Euston Road. He was smoking. One of his peculiarities was, that he was always smoking: he invariably had the stump of a cigar in his mouth. He was a slow smoker: a weed of a decent size would last him for an hour, while it would not last another man a quarter of that time. There was a thoughtful look about his thin but expressive face, and he seemed a sort of animated calculating machine, which was busily engaged in adding, in subtracting, and multiplying at a rate which was really fearful to contemplate. Occasionally he took out a little book from a secret receptacle in his coat. Its pages were disfigured by the names of horses, printed in small letters. This was to show the entries for the Metropolitan Handicap, or the July Stakes, or the Northumberland Plate. There were pencil-marks against most of these horses, for Gentleman Barton bet against every probable starter; and if the horse did not run, so much the better for him, because when a horse was scratched the backer lost his money.

On alighting from the omnibus he wended his solitary way through a series of quiet streets, until he reached one so still, so quiet, and so tomb-like, in the burning sunshine, that it might have been in Chancery, only the windows were not broken, as those of property with a title in dispute usually are. There were no children playing in the gutters, nor was there a sandy-haired cnr to eat up the cagmag of the "kennel," and bay at the rising moon. Perhaps the heat had affected every body, and made them seek an involuntary refuge in an afternoon siesta, which in hot weather is very grateful to those who are afflicted with an adipose body, and groan beneath the weight of superincumbent flesh and fat.

Gentleman Barton stopped before one of the houses in this street, and looked up at the windows, which were on the basement-story garnished as to their sills with mignonette in boxes. White network curtains shaded the room, and a canary-cage, pendent by a chain from a pole, gave one an idea of melody, which was further confirmed by the presence of a mule canary, which dilated its little throat, and opened its diminutive beak, and trilled forth the songs of its native land with an energy that was sometimes appalling to people with weak nerves and an imperfect digestion.

Taking a key from his pocket, he inserted it in the lock, and threw the door open. Just as he took the key out again, the rustling of a silk dress behind him roused his attention, and, turning round, he was confronted by a woman about twenty years of age, strikingly beautiful, and very dark ; so dark indeed

as to be almost Spanish in appearance. Her complexion was of a light-olive shade ; but when the lids fell down over her eyes, and the long lashes fringing them stole over her cheek, how very lovely she looked ! Had a stranger seen her for the first time, without knowing any thing of her extraction or her antecedents, he would have conjectured that a current of fiery Andalusian blood—*sangre azul*—was burning in her veins ; but he would have been wrong, for she was a Norfolk girl, and had not been in London above a year or two. She wore a brown-silk dress—a very light shade—over which was thrown a black Maltese-lace mantilla, which contrasted favourably with a fairy-like white-tulle bonnet, about which there was not a single flower or sprig of heather. She lowered her sun-shade, and cast her eyes upon the ground, as if she deprecated a meeting with Barton at that particular moment. Her light gloves fitted her to perfection, and some little dents in them showed that she had more than one ring on her fingers, studded with precious stones.

Barton looked at her sternly, and led the way into the house, saying, “ Come in.”

She followed him submissively, although there was that in her eye which ought to have told Barton that there was something of the tigress in that woman’s nature ; but perhaps he was already aware of the fact, and was quite prepared to take his chance of any sudden assertion of independence on her part. This lady—why should she be deprived of a vague title, which is indiscriminately applied in these leveling days, when even a butcher-boy and cobbler’s lad

is an esquire?—went by the name of Mrs. Barton ; but she was not John Barton's wife, for all that : he had never taken her to church, and tied himself irrevocably to her ; nor had he to reproach himself with originally seducing her from the paths of virtue. She was by no means immaculate when he met with her, nor had the process of regeneration been working in a very speedy manner since she had lived with him. She might have done much better than John Barton, but she took a fancy to him ; and when that is the case, a woman will sacrifice a great deal. Being impulsive, and of a generous disposition, and rejoicing in the pride of youth, she did not think much of the future ; and if she did, it was with a cynical bitterness, which showed that she had suffered during her earthly pilgrimage ; but whether she had been purified by the soul-chastening process, was another question.

Barton entered a handsomely furnished room on the ground-floor, agreeably perfumed by the odour of the mignonette which penetrated through the open window. A heavy velvet-pile table-cloth bore upon its handsome surface a vase of flowers, choice and expensive, an album for photographs, and several richly bound books. Barton threw himself into an arm-chair, pulled away at his cigar to keep it alight while he was talking, and said, "So you have been out, Milly?"

"Yes," she replied laconically.

"I thought I told you not to go out without my permission?"

"Very possibly you did."

"Why, then, have you done so?"

"Simply because I chose to."

"If it is to be a conflict of will, and a battle for authority, Milly, say so," exclaimed Barton; "I am game for either, or the two rolled into one."

"I can only repeat, that I shall please myself," she replied calmly.

"What if I say you shall not?"

"Say it."

"I do say it. I tell you, once for all, that my will shall be your will, and that you shall not dare to call your soul your own without I give you permission to do so."

Milly laughed scornfully.

"Do you clearly understand?"

"It is very easy for you to talk, but how can you accomplish what you threaten?"

"In many ways."

"Mention one."

"By force, if every thing else fails."

The woman walked up to John Barton on hearing this declaration, and laying her hand on his shoulder, said, slowly and emphatically, "Look here, Jack: if you ever attempt to lay so much as a finger upon me, or to utter, in my presence, one word which has the least suspicion of ruffianism or brutality about it, I shall leave this house, and no power on earth will ever induce me to enter it again."

"Oh! all right," responded Gentleman Barton, with a laugh; "you needn't ruffle your feathers for nothing at all."

His apparent submission seemed to mollify her,

for she said, "I have given up a good deal for you, and you ought to think of it. The least thing you can do is to do that."

"What have you given up for me?"

"More than I wish to remember."

"Well, suppose, for the sake of argument, that you have 'given up' something for me; you have had your *quid pro quo*."

"And what sort of a return is it? I have you," cried Milly sarcastically.

"Oh, say what you like. May as well have it out now as at any other time."

"A life with a betting-man—a fellow who, certainly, has plenty of money in one sense of the word; and how does he get it?"

"Why, on the square," cried Gentleman Barton indignantly.

"Yes, when it happens to run in that direction; but when it does not, you would not be so very particular about a cross."

"You have what money you want, so I don't see what you have to growl at," said Barton.

"Well, I won't deny that, when you're half-drunk, and consequently generous, you throw a bundle of bank-notes on the floor and tell me to help myself, but—"

She hesitated.

"Fire away. Don't be afraid of it," exclaimed Barton.

"But if you were to give me every farthing you made, it would be only a slight compensation to me for living with a man like yourself."

"There are lots of girls who'd be confoundedly glad to live with me."

"Such as they are," said Milly, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"You are infernally provoking to-day."

"I mean to be."

"Well, I wish to God you would hold your tongue. Is there any dinner ready for me?"

"No. You never ordered any."

"That's always the way I'm served," said Barton savagely.

"And what of it? Don't stare at me in that way—I am not your servant. Why don't you dine in the City, as other men do?"

Barton threw a sovereign on the table, and exclaimed, "Tell the girl to go and get me a cold ham and a brace of chickens."

"Do it yourself; the bell is nearer you than me."

"Upon my word, you are in a pretty temper to-day."

"Enough to make me."

"If I begin with you, I'll undertake to knock a little of it out of you," cried Gentleman Barton menacingly.

"Exactly; that's just like you. You are like Napoleon's Russian: scratch him, and you find the Tartar."

"You'll find that truer than you think. I'm not to be played with."

"No doubt you're a great man in your own estimation; but I have met other men besides you, and I can tell a gentleman from a cad any day."

He looked angrily at her.

"Here I am," she said provokingly. "If you want to 'knock it out of me,' now's your time; only—"

"What?" he said.

"You see that knife on the table?"

"Well—what of it?"

"Just this—that if you dared to touch me, I'd stick that knife into you as soon as look at you."

"Not you, my beauty; you're too precious fond of your neck."

"Oh! they would not hang me for killing a betting-man. Society is not so fond of the article as to mind about the reduction of the sum total by one."

"That's your opinion."

"Well, you try it, that's all. Try it. Strike me, and see what I'll do."

"You may go to blazes, if you like."

"When it suits me, perhaps I shall; only I hope you'll precede me."

"Are you going to shut up, or are you going to stand nagging there all day?"

"You had better find out," she replied.

"Because if you are, I shall take up my hat and hook it."

"Hadn't you better go now? I don't want you. I am sure you are not particularly fascinating or agreeable to-day."

"Go now!" vociferated Barton. "No, I'll be d— if I do. I'm not going to be turned out of my own place by any woman in London."

"Please yourself ; though, I tell you frankly, I would rather have your room than your company."

"I suppose you've been having a drain this morning?"

"If I wanted one, I certainly shouldn't consult you."

"Where have you been to?"

"Where do you think?"

"D— it all, Milly, I can't stand this sort of thing any longer," cried Barton, springing to his feet.

"You shouldn't upset me, then. It's your own fault," replied Milly.

Although Barton had obtained the distinguishing epithet of gentleman amongst his associates, he could both say and do a great many things which were coarse, if not brutal. Going up to Milly, he exclaimed, "You say another word, and see what will happen."

"Oh!" she cried, with a sneer, "I am not afraid of you, my dear fellow, nor half a dozen like you. You are only a welcher."

"It's a thundering lie," cried Barton, almost beside himself with rage. "You know very well that I never bested a man out of so much as a penny-piece in my life."

"I know nothing of the sort. I believe you are capable of any thing. Nothing is too bad for you to do."

"You think so?" he said savagely between his clenched teeth.

"I am sure of it."

"If you are not, you shall be."

He took a step nearer to her, glaring at her with savage ferocity, and raising his fist dealt her a severe blow between the eyes, which struck her to the ground.

She fell with a dull thud upon the carpet, and lay perfectly still, groaning and breathing heavily.

Gentleman Barton stood over her with his fists doubled, as if he were ready to repeat the gentle castigation he had so delicately administered ; but as she showed no signs of animation, he reseated himself in the arm-chair, discarding his warlike attitude, and lighting another cigar, which he smoked with the phlegm of a Dutchman.

"That just serves you jolly well right, my lady," he muttered. "I've promised myself that little bit of amusement for some time past. It'll teach you to keep a civil tongue in your head, and not to be quite so fast. I've never done it before—not to *her*, at least—but I know it does them all good.

'A woman, a dog, and a walnut-tree,
The more you beat them the better they be.'

That saying's as old as the hills, and I for one believe it."

Suddenly his eye fell upon the knife lying on the table ; he remembered Milly's threat, and rising, prudently removed it from the scene of action.

Cowards are always prudent. It stands them in the stead of bravery.

Milly opened her eyes and sighed. Then she

raised herself up on one arm and looked round her, as if she was going out of her mind.

Memory soon asserted its sway, and the events of the preceding ten minutes rushed over her like a flood. With a wild, panther-like cry she started to her feet, and not seeing the knife, made a rush at Barton, unarmed and defenceless as she was. Before he could strike her again she had seized him by the throat, with the palpable intention of strangling him. With some difficulty, and by exerting all his strength, Barton freed himself from her tenacious grasp, and laid hold of her two wrists, by which he held her. They were both on their feet now—Milly writhing, twisting, contorting like a sinuous serpent; Barton, firm as a rock, resisting every one of her frantic efforts at escape, and holding her as if with a chain of adamant.

“Let me go,” shrieked Milly.

“Not if I know it,” he replied, with a grim smile.

“Let me go, will you?”

The vocabulary of angry people is not generally very full. They cannot think of more than a few phrases, and those the shortest and simplest. So Milly placed her trust, confidence, and reliance upon

“Let me go.”

“Will you be quiet if I do?”

“Let me go.”

“What will you do?”

“You’ll see, you brute, when I get loose.”

“You’d better wait till you are.”

She uttered a savage cry, which was scarcely

human, and bending down her head she tried frantically to bite his hands ; but he soon compelled her to desist by jerking her own hands up against her mouth, the effect of which was to make her lips bleed, and to bruise her tender skin against her hard teeth.

Milly now became violently hysterical, and began to scream. Shriek after shriek rang through the room, until Barton grew alarmed, thinking she would arouse the whole house.

"Be quiet, can't you?" he said. "What is the good of making such an infernal row?"

She was past speaking to him now. Her mouth was covered with a frothy foam, her countenance convulsed with passionate rage, and she was hardly recognisable as a human being.

She sank towards the floor, and Barton, feeling her a dead weight on his arm, let her go. He repented his precipitancy, however ; for feeling herself free, her temporary exhaustion passed away, and she sprang up with an elasticity which was wonderful. As soon as she had gained her feet, she avoided Barton, and running to the fireplace, seized the poker, with which she began to demolish every thing within reach. The lustres of Bohemian glass on the mantelpiece were soon a complete wreck, and the mirror would have quickly followed had not Barton once more struck her and felled her to the ground.

"By G—," he said, "it's the only way to serve such devils of women."

Poor Milly ! her face was a mass of bruises, and she was stained with blood, which stood on her

skin and on the clothes she wore in little scarlet patches.

"Oh! you rogue! you scoundrel! you thief! You—you—you—Drat this 'ere asthma—I—I—can't get my words out fas-fast 'nough," exclaimed a voice behind Gentleman Barton. The door had opened without his being aware of the fact, and Mrs. Cope, the landlady of the house in which he lodged, had entered noiselessly.

"She had been aroused in the first instance by the screaming. That, however, she took no notice of. It was not exactly a common occurrence; but, to use her own observation on the matter to her only daughter Sophy—"Married people will fall out. Some takes it easy; others is what I may call hammer-and-tongs. This 'ere at present is hammer; tongs hasn't begun yet. Wait till it does, and I'll give 'em a bit of my mind; for it's furnished apartments and no rent paid in advance, only a deposit, which it's paltry, as a sort of bonus lieu of there being no references given or required, which it's a foolish thing to do, my dear, and one as I do hope you'll avoid when you're married and go into the lodging line, or that of furnished apartments for single gentlemen; the latter being, in my humble opinion, better nor all the women, and good pay when they're not hard up and a case of bolt,—women being troublesome and vexatious, and for everlasting turning up their noses at every thing that isn't first-rate, which you can't expect cooking of a Saturday from Mary Jane (where there's but one servant kep, and she only a bit of a girl, to wait at table and that), or

eight o'clock on Sunday evening, because people have been to Cremorne for a prommyarde to get a appetite for dinner, or is a going to have a bit of a sing-song at the London Pavilion—which, my dear, I'm wrong, always begging your pardon for so being, singing not going on at the Pavilion on a Sabbath, but only beer and biscuits, and smoke that thick you might cut it with a knife."

Gentleman Barton turned round, looking rather annoyed at the intrusion.

"When I want you, Mrs. Cope, I'll send for you."

"Oh, but I am wanted; and once here, I'll stay. Poor dear! what have you been a-doing to her?"

She fell on her knees by the side of Milly, and taking one of her hands within one of hers, chafed it in a kindly manner.

"Be good enough to leave the room, Mrs. Cope," cried Barton. His blood was up, and he was quite prepared to lay violent hands upon any one who interfered with him.

"Not I," she replied, with a defiant gesture.

"Will you go?"

"No, I won't!"

He hesitated a moment, and she iterated, "No, I won't! Do you understand that? No, I won't! Would you like to hear it again? No, I won't! That's flat!"

He advanced an arm as if he intended to forcibly remove her, but she cried, "Not you; you dare not do it! I'd raise the street! I'd have the police in!

I'd give you six months ! You don't knock me about for nothing ! Oh, no, not for nothing, mister !"

Barton hardly knew what to do. He was, in plain language, afraid to touch Mrs. Cope. She was a determined woman, and he did not know to what extremes she might go if provoked. It was not exactly his wish to be locked up in a station-house, because he had work in hand which would not admit of any delay. So he resumed his seat once more, and smoked with a firm energy, which showed how exasperated he was.

"Sophy !" said Mrs. Cope.

"Yes, ma," responded a voice from the lower regions.

"Don't stand a-hollering and a-gaping, but come when you're called."

"Who are you talking to?" replied the same subterranean voice.

"You let me catch you, you hussy, and I'll let you know."

"Well, I'm sure you needn't go on like that for nothing. You've no call to go on at me."

"You come when you're called."

"Can't you say what you want?"

"Bring the vinegar, and the sal volatile, and some cold water and a sponge ; and the salts—they're in my left-hand corner top drawer, just about the middle, next to the box of pills and the frilled night-cap."

"Where's the keys?"

"Oh, that girl ! If she ain't enough to drive a saint crazy. Was there ever a poor woman worried

as I am ? If she belonged to some, they'd kill her, I know they would !"

"Where's the keys, ma ?"

"Why, hanging up, you silly."

"Hanging where ?"

"Just over the toasting fork near the kitchen fireplace."

Sophy was not long in bringing what her mother asked her for ; and the various restoratives brought Milly round, although it was easy to see that her second swoon was much more serious than the first.

"Where am I ?" she said in a faint voice.

"Along with friends, deary," replied Mrs. Cope in a caressing tone.

"Where—where is—"

"Mr. Barton, dear ?"

"Yes."

"He's not far off, the brute. Oh, you may glare at me ; I must speak my mind—I can't help it. A man who hits a woman as you've hit this poor dear is no better than a born gorilla, and no good. Oh, if I was Queen of England, wouldn't I give it you fellows ! I'd make it hot for you ! I'd put you in the pillory, or flog you at a cart's tail, you low-bred scoundrel ! A gentleman wouldn't do it, not he ; he'd scorn the action."

Mrs. Cope sponged Milly's forehead with vinegar, which seemed to revive her very much. She sat up, and pushing back her long, wavy hair, which was all matted and tangled with the wet, said, "Let me get away from him. If there is any thing owing to you,

I will pay it in a day or two ; but go away from here I must."

"With your face like that?"

"Is it bad?"

"Shocking!"

Milly got up with difficulty, went straight to the glass and looked at her battered features, sinking back into Mrs. Cope's arms, sobbing bitterly.

"Oh, that I should live to be beaten like this!" she cried passionately. "Oh, oh, I wish I were dead! Oh, my poor face!"

Her paroxysm was very violent while it lasted.

"Now, don't you take on so, my dear," said Mrs. Cope soothingly. "Take my advice, lock him up for it."

"No, no, I only want to get away from him."

"But he'll follow you."

"He can't—he can't—he can't; he hasn't the power," she sobbed hysterically.

"A husband can always follow his wife."

"But I am not his wife; I never was his wife, and I thank God for it."

"Oh, that's a horse of another colour," exclaimed Mrs. Cope, starting back with genuine surprise.

"Who'd have thought it?" said Sophy.

"Hold your tongue till you're spoken to," said her mother.

Sophy instantly relapsed into silence.

"So you're not his wife?"

Milly answered her with sobs.

"That's a true bill," remarked Barton.

"More shame for you to go and hit her, then,"

said Mrs. Cope magnanimously. "I am not the one to desert a woman when she's put upon, just because she don't get no right to wear a wedding-ring on her finger, and ought to go about with a scarlet letter as they do in America. I'm told that it's an unpleasant custom, and one I don't much approve."

"Get me a damp towel to wipe my eyes, and another bonnet, please" (the one she wore was torn to tatters).

"You're not going, dear?"

"Yes, yes, indeed I must ; I cannot stay here."

Mrs. Cope sent Sophy for the required things, and when Milly was dressed and her face was shrouded by a thick veil, she grasped the good-natured landlady by the hand and said, "I'm much obliged to you for your kindness."

"Stay where you are, Milly," exclaimed Barton.

She made him no answer, but only cast a scathing, contemptuous glance at him.

"Do you hear me?"

"You have no power over me," she said. "You cannot prevent my going."

"I intend to try."

"I am not your wife. Besides, after the way in which I have been treated, you cannot expect me to stay."

"You used to profess to love me once."

"Profess!"

"Well, yes ; what else was it but profession ? Genuine love does not vanish so easily."

"You have destroyed every atom of love, John, by your treatment to-day. If I had loved you

enough to lay down my life for you, what you have just done would have dissipated all my devotion to you. I have too much pride and self-respect to live with a man who can beat a woman so cruelly as you have beaten me. A man ought to control his temper better than a woman, or what is the use of that superiority which a man claims over a woman? You should remember that women are weak, impulsive creatures, and should be checked, not annihilated."

"Stay a few minutes, Milly."

"Not a second."

"Why not talk it over?"

"No."

"I am willing to admit that I was hasty."

"You could not deny it."

"I am sorry for it now."

"Look at my face!" she replied, lifting her veil.

"You should not have brought it on yourself by exasperating me," he said sullenly.

"That is all very well. I am only glad to think that I have found out what you are so quickly. If I had lived with you till I was too old to work for my living, what future should I have had with you? If I had, God help me!"

"Listen to reason, Milly."

She shook her head sadly.

"You will gain nothing by being obstinate."

Without replying, Milly moved towards the door, which Sophy held open for her, and passed into the passage; once there, she sat down on a chair, and placing her hand over her face, shed abundant tears.

"What is it?" said Sophy kindly.

"Oh, my heart is brokeu—broken—broken!" replied Milly in a touching voice, uttering the last three words with a peculiar plaintiveness.

Controlling herself by an effort, she summoned courage enough to enter the street, and plodded wearily along it, thrown upon the wide world, and having to begin life again.

"Only to think, now," said Sophy to herself as she shut the door, "of her being one of those bad girls! Oh, my! well, if it wasn't wrong, I wouldn't mind it, if they didn't knock me about. But look at the dresses and the jewelry she's got! Why, her black silks are all corded and as thick as *moirés*. Oh, my! those black silks!"

Mrs. Cope no sooner heard the front-door slam, than she turned her attention to that degraded specimen of humanity, Gentleman Barton.

"Now, sir!" she exclaimed, "me and you's got to have a word or two before we part."

"As many as you like, my good womau; only, I warn you that it will be worse for you if you give me any of your impudence."

"Don't you holler afore you're hurt, mister. I ouly wish my poor husband had been alive."

"I cannot regret his decease, at least as far as he is concerned; for if it is any mercy to escape from a shrewish tongue and a brazen face, why, he's in heaven!"

"Brazen face! ah, very well, you and I'll be one presently. The poor dear man is in heaven, and lucky for you he is there. For if he wasn't, do you know what he'd do?"

"Pray tell me."

"Why, welt you !"

"And what may that be ?"

"Tan you !"

"I must still plead ignorance."

"Leather you !"

"Has that any thing to do with the tanning process ?"

"Oh, don't go shamming with me," cried Mrs. Cope impatiently. "I wish I hadn't the asthma, which takes me short of breath now and then. I'd give it you. I'd take you in hand myself. Who are you, to go and beat a woman ? Perhaps you seduced her, you villain. I'll get you mobbed in the street. There's Mrs. Perkins, and Mrs. Molloy, and Mrs. Wilkins, and a 'ole 'ost of others, friends of mine—I may say partik'lar—they won't stand by and see me abused, or my lodgers insulted. Why, what are you ? You couldn't give a reference, could you ? I was obliged to let you in without one, wasn't I ? How do you get your money ? Nobody knows. You mean, pitiful wretch ! you're not fit to live in a decent house, and I'll see you quick out of mine, you prowling night-bird. Look at your face now ; it's as white as paper. I knew you weren't a gentleman when I first set eyes on you. Do you think I lived housekeeper to the Duke of Wentworth nigh twelve year for nothing ? No ; the Duchess came herself and gave me warning. Says I, 'Your Grace, may I ask the fault you have to find ?' 'Yes,' she replies, proud as Lucifer—which it's not a match I mean, but the Prince of Darkness—'you're too lady-like, Cope.'

‘Thank your Grace,’ I says—just so ; and that very night I packed up all my traps and was out of the mansion before some of the under-servants knew that I was going.”

Barton regretted his hastiness now that Milly was really gone, and was so rapt in his own thoughts that he paid no attention to the remarks of the voluble landlady. Her abuse was lost upon him, and she had exhausted herself before he knew that she had begun. When she had calmed down he requested her to make out her bill, as he should leave her house that evening and go to an hotel.

She replied surlily that she would do so, and retired below stairs with Sophy. In which delectable region she grumbled at intervals like an engine letting off steam.

Barton packed up his things, and when all was in readiness sent for a cab and drove to the Haymarket, where there was an hotel which was kept by a friend of his, who he knew would make him comfortable during his stay, and charge him a reasonable price for the accommodation. Had he been a stranger to this enterprising caterer for the public, the case might have been different ; but vultures do not usually prey upon one another, nor are dogs in the habit of eating dogs.

He ordered a dinner, which was not deserving of the distinguishing epithet “sumptuous ;” but any reasonable officer in the army, or member of Parliament at his club, would have been perfectly satisfied with the repast, which was at once comprehensive and *récherché*. The proprietor of the hotel was

a foreigner. It was difficult to say whether he was a Frenchman or a Swiss ; he spoke English very well, but his French was perfect. The frequenters of this establishment were chiefly foreigners who had seen his name and address advertised in some foreign journal, or in the pages of a railway book, or had had it given them on board a steamer. Barton ordered a bottle of hermitage, which he preferred, after dinner, to any other beverage. He considered it less intoxicating than champagne or any of the after-dinner wines, such as port, sherry, and the rest, with the exception of claret, which wine he was not very fond of unless he could get it of the finest brand, to do which was, he knew, out of the question in the Haymarket.

He sat at the open window sipping his iced wine, cracking an occasional filbert, or looking into the street and watching the stream of pedestrians go backwards and forwards. His reflections were not very agreeable. He had by his ill temper driven away from him a woman who was passionately attached to him, until his wanton brutality, which nothing in the world could excuse, had driven her from him and broken up his little home. He could not deny that he had been happy with her, but he consoled himself with the idea that it was better for him to be unfettered. And there was a vague suspicion in his mind that she would forgive him as soon as her features resumed their wonted appearance. Had he been better acquainted with Milly's nature, he would never have entertained such an erroneous idea, which was the most insane delusion

that could have mocked him. He grew annoyed as he dwelt upon his private affairs, and it was a relief to him when the waiter brought him an evening paper, and he could seek that distraction in politics or commerce which he could not find elsewhere. At about ten o'clock he put on his hat and strolled into some neighboring concert-rooms, met several of his friends, and "stood" several bottles of champagne, for which he paid in hard cash over the counter. And such champagne ! gooseberry-wine at a shilling a bottle, with just a dash of carbonate of soda in it, would have been infinitely preferable. When he was tired of the inane nigger melodies and the noisy songs, the vulgar parodies, and the badly executed operatic selections, which, together with tumbling, rope-walking, and melancholy solos, were the chief attractions of the establishment, he turned into a casino, stared at the crowd, which returned the compliment by staring back at him, and as the throng began to thin, he took his departure and sought the shelter of a night-house. There was a florid-looking woman behind the bar ; and a few painted, pale-faced things, having the semblance of women, were sitting here and there, showily bedizened in inexpensive tawdry, drinking gin and talking to one another with a fierce energy which was not a natural flow of spirits, but the result of frequent potations. No better deed was ever done by a chief commissioner of police than the suppression of night-houses, as such iniquitous dens only ruin the health and the pocket of those who infest them.

He nodded carelessly to the woman behind the

bar, and walked up-stairs into the private apartments of the house, where only those who were very intimate with the proprietor were allowed to go. The room he entered was handsomely furnished, and tenanted by two men : one a short, stout, round-shouldered, fat-faced man, with a rubicund countenance and a red nose ; the other a good-looking young fellow, who some time before was with Fanny Carruthers in the crescent. He had been with Fanny to Blackwall, and she had gone home to dress, promising to meet him at some owlsh haunt about midnight.

The stout man was the proprietor of the night-house, and was generally called the Little Doctor by those who knew him intimately, although his real name was Hincks. Barton stood still in the doorway, and waited until he was noticed and spoken to. The table at which the men were sitting was garnished by a couple of silver tankards with napkins tied round them, denoting that they contained some "cup" or other. A box of cigars stood open, and, if the eye is a good judge in such cases, held some very reputable weeds.

Ah!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Hincks, "there's Barton."

"Who the devil's Barton?" cried Carruthers rather rudely. He had been drinking all the evening, and he was not over particular about what he said. As he had plenty of money, and spent it freely, he was treated in the Haymarket by men and women as a small prince, and he thought himself privileged to do or say any thing. His disposition was rather arbitrary and tyrannical, and he

found a pleasure in showing his superiority in a monetary sense, if in no other, to those around him.

"Barton's a gentleman. You've met him—first-rate sort—stunning fellow," replied Hincks in a whisper to Carruthers—"man to know, sir."

"Don't want to know him. Don't want to know any body; but I'll lay you that I lick you five times out of seven in tossing," exclaimed Carruthers.

"It's lucky you've come, Barton," said Hincks; "you can see fair play, and that this gentleman doesn't nobble me."

"Shall be very glad," answered Barton, adding, "Have you a bell here?"

"One near the fireplace."

"Just touch it, and order me a Moselle cup."

He threw himself into a chair, helped himself to a cigar in a languid manner, and stared insolently at Carruthers, until that individual, also languid, was roused, and his curiosity piqued, to know "who the fellah was."

It seemed that Barton had dropped in by pure accident; but if Carruthers had known that it was a prearranged affair for him to do so, he would have been rather slow of making bets, or of having any thing to do with the spirited gentleman, who was skilful at tossing. When the waiter brought Barton the Moselle cup which Hincks had ordered for him at his express desire, he drank a deep draught of it, as he knew that for him some of the choicest wine the place could boast of would be produced. Barton and Hincks worked in couples. Gentleman

Barton was the decoy, and the most skilful hand at "picking-up and rooking a swell" of which a region fertile in rogues and roguery could boast. If Hincks had any reason to suppose that some one worth "bleeding" would visit him, he always gave Barton the "office," and the process was satisfactorily accomplished between the two. Barton contrived, before he had been five minutes in the room, to convey an important piece of information to his confederate. Hincks was about to light a fresh cigar, when Barton handed a piece of paper over to him, saying, "Want a light?"

A peculiar contraction of the eyelid informed Hincks that there was something written on the paper which it was worth his while to read. He did not neglect the hint, and as he held the paper up to the candle to ignite it, he read—"Badminton is scratched for the Cup at Goodwood."

Badminton had all along been first favourite, and it was thought by the knowing ones a dangerous thing to bet against a horse supported by a powerful party, and considered by the stable safe to win if run upon her merits. So if any clever fellow could make use of this intelligence before the event was publicly known, he might amass a large sum by dishonestly trading upon a foregone conclusion. The next second Hincks was calmly lighting his cigar with the precious document; but he telegraphed a thankful glance to Barton, in which was condensed much meaning.

"You said something about tossing, I think?" remarked Barton.

"I did. I was going to toss this old scoundrel for—for what was it?"

"A fiver," suggested Hincks mildly.

"Think it was," replied Carruthers.

"Will you cry to me, or I to you?"

"Oh! you spin it. Send it up well, and don't chisel me."

Up went the coin.

"What's it to be?" cried Hincks.

"Woman, because I love her," replied Carruthers.

"It's a man," exclaimed Hincks, catching it skilfully, and exhibiting it in his open palm.

"Send it up again."

The process of "skying" the half-crown was repeated some half-dozen times; but either the luck was against Carruthers, or Mr. Hincks' manipulation was too subtle and delicate, for the young officer invariably lost.

"Hang it!—what's that I've lost?" he said.

"Oh! nothing."

"But how much?"

"About thirty quid, I suppose."

"Do you want the tin to-night?"

"No, not I. Give us your name on a slip of paper."

"Where's a pen and ink?"

"I don't believe there's such a thing in the house."

"O Ananias! O Sapphira!"

"Ah! there is, though. Barton, will you oblige me?"

"Where?"

"On that sideboard."

He was supplied with writing utensils, and handed a pen and half a sheet of writing-paper to Carruthers, exclaiming—

"Any where here—'I. O. U., Edward Hincks'—that's it—'thirty-five pounds.'"

"Thought you said thirty?"

"Did I? Oh, then the other's interest. It's all right," replied Mr. Hincks, with consummate assurance.

When the acknowledgment was signed and reposing in Mr. Hincks's waistcoat-pocket, that worthy said, "Going to Goodwood, sir?"

"Yes. Sure to go to Goodwood."

"Ah! What horses are going to run? I—'pon my word—I know so deuced little about these matters, that I'm a fool at them. Any child might take me in; and for that reason I never bet, without it is a pound or two on the quiet with a friend; and then more for the amusement than for the sake of winning any thing."

"There's Badminton."

"Badminton! Have you heard of the horse, Barton?"

"Oh, yes! First favourite."

"Favourites never win," said Hincks contemptuously.

"Will you bet this one don't?" said Carruthers eagerly.

"Well, I don't mind laying against Badminton; what are the odds?"

"One hundred to fifty," exclaimed Barton, "or thereabouts."

"Oh, that's too much ; I don't mind a quiet sum."

"You're an old screw, Hincks," exclaimed Carruthers. "Why, I'd back Badminton for five hundred pounds."

"I'll take you," cried Barton sharply.

"Eh !"

Carruthers looked up in astonishment.

"I am willing to deposit a cool thousand with Hincks," continued Barton.

"Oh, no ! certainly not. That sort of thing's not necessary amongst gentlemen," replied Hincks.

"Who's your friend ?" inquired Carruthers, aside, Hincks. "Is he square ?"

"Not a squarer man in England, sir. Good as gold in every way. He'll stick to his bargain ; he always does, as hard as nails, I can tell you."

"Weil, it's a bet," observed Carruthers, making an entry in his pocket-book. "Your name, I think, is Barton ?"

"John Barton."

"Mr. John Barton, about Badminton for the Goodwood Cup—not Stakes ?"

"Not Stakes."

"A thousand to fifty—I mean five hundred. Excuse me. Shall I see you here, or at your club ?"

"I will make a point of being here after the race, if I do not see you on the course," replied Barton.

"Very well. Order some more wine, Hincks, will you ?" said Carruthers.

"I shouldn't object to some supper," remarked Barton.

Hincks took the hint, and ordered some to be brought up-stairs.

"Do you play *écarté*?" said Hincks to Carruthers.

"Occasionally."

"Nice game. I wish I could play, but I am so stupid at those things. I nearly broke my neck once trying to learn backgammon, and then I couldn't do it."

Barton said nothing.

"Do you play, Mr. Barton?"

"Now and then, to pass away the time."

"You two gentlemen might play for ten minutes while I go down-stairs and see about some supper; but now I come to think of it, I don't believe there's a pack of cards in the place."

The idea of the Little Doctor not having a pack of cards in the place seemed so exquisitely delicious to Barton, that he had the greatest difficulty in restraining a burst of laughter. He only succeeded in doing so by stroking his moustache with military fierceness.

"Tell you what I'll do," suddenly cried Hincks, "I'll send over the way to the hotel, and they'll lend me one, being neighbours and that."

He went down-stairs, and a pack of cards was brought up by the waiter in an incredibly short space of time. Play commenced, and it was singular that Gentleman Barton turned up the king with a frequency that was almost miraculous. In a quarter of an hour Carruthers had lost twenty pounds.

"I'll play you double or quits," he said desperately.

"As you like."

The cards were dealt with precision.

"I propose—" said Carruthers.

"Play," returned Barton abruptly, adding directly, "I count the king. Two tricks. Your deal. I mark three points."

Carruthers lost, and taking out his purse paid Barton forty pounds in notes.

Supper had hardly been placed on the table before a lady made her appearance. Carruthers looked up, and exclaimed, "Fanny!"

"Just in time, I see. Give us some fiz."

Gentleman Barton, with the utmost politeness, handed her a tumbler of champagne. She just touched it with her lips, and said, "You've worked him nicely, haven't you?"

"Nothing to speak about," was the unconcerned reply.

"As long as I stand in, I don't care."

"You shall have some diamonds to-morrow that will astonish you."

"Where do they come from?"

"Never mind. Don't look a gift-horse in the mouth."

"From that crib in the City, I suppose, which was robbed last Sunday?"

"If you don't like them, send them back."

"Come along, Fanny," cried Carruthers; "the supper is getting cold."

It was policy on the part of Barton and the

Little Doctor to keep on good terms with Fanny, because had they quarrelled with her she would never have patronised the place again, and, what was worse to them, she would not have allowed Carruthers to do so either. Although her allusion to a robbery in the City was made in a jocular manner, she was not far wrong in her conjecture. Dexterous thieves like the robbers in question generally brought their booty to the Haymarket Jews, and, although they sold it at a great, an enormous, a prodigious sacrifice, they disposed of it securely, and were not afraid of having it traced; for the bulk of it usually went to Australia, or at all events to a safe distance.

It was early morning when Fanny returned to her lodgings. She had gone the rounds and amused herself with some of her old acquaintances, who were glad of an opportunity of speaking to a woman who was at once clever and pretty. And what had become of Carruthers? He was disposed of about half an hour after supper; the fact being, that he was so very tipsy that when they laid him on a sofa he went to sleep without losing any time.

CHAPTER V.

SECOND THOUGHTS.

It sometimes happens that a man is so overwhelmed by a perfect torrent of misfortunes, that he sinks beneath the unbearable weight. His shoulders may be broad and strong, but the load which is placed upon

them by fate literally breaks the man's back ; he grows tired of waging an unequal war, and, sinking down by the roadside, gives up the contest in despair.

This was the case with Dick Stoffles on leaving his daughter. He was a man utterly without principle ; and as long as Fanny Carruthers did not object to supply him with money, he felt no compunction in accepting the dishonourable alms she gave him. In plain language, he lived on his daughter's disgrace ; but he was too callous to suffer any inward qualms or conscientious pangs in consequence. He was very base, and he became baser when Fanny refused to let him have any more of her money. He walked a short distance down the mouldy crescent, and then, almost broken-hearted, sat down upon a doorstep, wondering what he should do in the great disaster which had befallen him. His repulse at his daughter's was totally unexpected by him ; a man who had placed unlimited confidence in the integrity and honour of an individual, and made him his banker, could not have been more surprised at his sudden bankruptcy than Stoffles was at what he called Fanny's hard-heartedness and unfilial conduct. At first it stunned him ; and he thought the very best thing, indeed the only thing he could do, was to walk straight down to the water's edge and be a case of "found drowned" the next day, or whenever the uncertain water gave up its dead. But a man who is content to exist upon his child's shame must, of necessity, be a coward ; and Stoffles had a great dread of feeling the water, cold and insinuating, penetrating into his ears and closing round his head

with an icy embrace. He was afraid to kill himself, or he would have been driven to it by bad luck and despair long ago. He dare not do it ; and so he sat on the clay-cold steps till the Hansom cab containing his daughter swept by him on its way to Blackwall, and people wondered who the morose-looking old man was who sat so still and motionless on the doorstep, with his elbows set on his knees and head resting on his hands. Some felt inclined to give him some half-pence, but there was that about him which restrained them. His attire did not proclaim him a beggar ; on the contrary, there was an air of mild dignity about him which his misery did not altogether obliterate. The policeman on the beat eyed him suspiciously, but forbore to move him on at first, thinking that he might make a mistake ; but as the hours multiplied themselves, and the twilight began to gloam over the great city, he approached him, and said sternly, "Now, sir, you must be moving. This sort of thing won't do, not at no price."

Dick Stoffles looked up with a puzzled expression, as if he hardly knew where he was, or what had happened to him, or who was talking to him ; but the uniform of the policeman recalled him to himself, and rising slowly, he gave the officer a shilling and hurried on in the darkness.

"That's a rummy start, too," muttered the policeman ; "he ain't a smasher, is he, and given me a duffing shilling?"—he bit it—"No, it's right enough. Well, we see a many strange things. However, I've moved him on, and it's nothing more to do with me."

If he had picked up a dead body in the street, he would have sent to the station-house for a stretcher, and said it had "nothing more to do with him."

Stoffles went to a small public-house in Westminster, and spent the night there carousing with some other men, who, like himself, wished to drown care. In the morning he felt wildly excited and restless, and walked into one of the parks, where he laid down on the grass beneath a tree, and looked up at the blue sky with his bleared and burning eyes, and thought of the many mysteries hidden in its fleecy bosom. But he turned away from contemplating it when he remembered what a wretch he was, and what a slender chance he had of ever entering amidst the select few who had been good and just on earth, and found their reward in the long after-time when the soul alone lived, and the body was dust such as churchyards are made of.

Of a sudden his besotted countenance cleared, a gleam of intelligence shot athwart it, and pressing his clammy hands to his heated temples, he tried to collect his thoughts.

"Where's Gentleman Barton?" he murmured. "Didn't he promise me money if I would serve him, and didn't I, like a fool, refuse his offer? What's the use? I won't be nice any longer. I'll fall in with him; I'll show my face on the Ruins once more, and they shall say that Dick Stoffles had enough dust to pay his debts and fulfil his engagements."

It was anomalous and strange to hear a man like Stoffles talking about honour. Honour, as far as he was concerned, was an abstraction; he wished to

make it a reality, but he could not do so, because he had long ago discarded it. It cannot exist in a fragmentary state ; it must be wholly embraced, or not at all.

It was early, and the rules and regulations of the park in which he was stated that the ranger permitted bathing. Stoffles was aware of this fact, and he wended his way to a lake, which might have looked a little more like crystal and less like mud ; but not being able to help its nature, it was decidedly viscous. Taking off his clothes, he plunged into the cool water, and after a short swim he felt much refreshed. When he left the park, he looked in at a tavern and had an egg beaten up in some rum-and-milk. For a penny a barber shaved him ; and he once more presented a respectable appearance. He bent his steps towards the Haymarket, for he guessed that he should find Gentleman Barton somewhere about that neighbourhood, and he was right in his supposition. A Hansom cab was standing by the pavement, and just as Dick Stoffles came up Barton jumped into it.

“ Wo ! ” cried Stoffles to the driver, and in another minute he was sitting by the side of his friend.

“ Where are you going to ? ” he asked.

“ To Goodwood.”

“ Oh, ah ! I forgot.”

“ I have had no sleep all night, but I shall get some going down, and I shall come back as soon as the racing is over.”

“ I’ll go to the station with you.”

“ Glad of your company.”

"I've been thinking over our conversation yesterday, Barton."

"Indeed ! Take a cigar ?"

"Thank you, no ; I am too shaky to smoke just yet. Like you, I have made a night of it."

"You won't mind my lighting up ?"

"Not at all. Don't you mind me."

"Here goes, then," cried Barton, striking a fusee.

"I think I was a little hasty yesterday."

"So do I."

"Well, it's not too late ?"

"I don't know that," returned Gentleman Barton coolly.

"Have you got some one else ?"

"Spoken to two or three. Don't do to go to sleep over these things."

"Of course not," said Stoffles, looking crest-fallen.

"But I have made no positive engagement with any one of them," continued Barton.

"I'm willing to lend you a helping hand."

"Thank you ; that's half a dozen for me, and all the rest for yourself, isn't it ?" said Gentleman Barton coldly.

"No man works for nothing."

"You're ready to work for any one who will pay you. Is that it ?"

"That's it."

"Very well. I can't talk to you now, for I have not time, and it is not a fit place to speak about important matters in. Wait till I come back, and we will have an hour together."

"Couldn't you take me to Goodwood?" asked Stoffles.

"Certainly not."

"I don't want to go with you. I'll go third class."

"Won't do, my boy," replied Gentleman Barton, who had his own reasons for not wishing to be seen with Stoffles, or, if at all, as little as possible.

"Have you any money about you?" persisted Stoffles.

"Loads," replied the tempter.

"Any to spare?"

"Not much. I've got a couple of fivers."

"That'll do. Give them me, to show that you are in earnest, and I'm yours."

"Hand and glove?"

"Hand and glove."

Barton handed over the two five-pound notes, and having arrived at the station, alighted nimbly from his cab, and to prevent Stoffles seeing him off, exclaimed, "Cabby!"

"Sir."

"Take this gentleman back again."

On the platform he was joined by the Little Doctor, and they engaged a *coupé* by making the guard of the train a present of half-a-guinea, which, considering their night's work, they could well afford to do.

It is no exaggeration to say, that Dick Stoffles, after this interview, felt as if he had sold himself to the devil; for although he was, as has already been stated, a man of no principle, he had never yet been

rash or wicked enough to place himself within the power of the law ; and though Gentleman Barton had not condescended to be very explicit, Stoffles knew that he ran the risk of being imprisoned for the term of his natural life. Yet his wants were pressing, and he could not afford to be scrupulous. It has been said that circumstances make men what they are, and the saying is pregnant with truth. Had Fanny Carruthers given her father the money he demanded, but which, tiring of his persecutions, she refused to do, he would not have been under the painful necessity of yielding to Gentleman Barton's wiles, and jeopardising his independence so as to possess himself of a few pounds.

A few pounds !

This little phrase explains more than half the crime which fills the pages of our criminal records ; only now and then, instead of being a few pounds, it is a few shillings or a few pence.

Alas for human nature ! Alas for imperfect and defective civilisation ! And alas for the improvidence of man, who, after all, is but an indifferent monster !

CHAPTER VI.

FANNY'S FRIEND.

FANNY CARRUTHERS had a friend—few women are without that amiable incumbrance. Fanny's friend lodged in the same house, and was, consequently, a "great" friend. Her name was Annie May. She

was tall and slender, with a very white face in the morning, but not altogether colourless in the evening. Her hair was very, very light and floss-silky. She washed it every other day to keep it as light as she could. People said that her hair was her great charm. She wore expensive jewelry, but she had not two words to say for herself. She was utterly inane; and yet her manner was, to a certain extent, pleasant; she was kind, generous, and hospitable. She had no mind of her own: Fanny governed her entirely; she would make her do any single thing she liked. There was no music in Annie's voice, but Fanny's was melodious; its tones rang in your ears for hours and days after you had met her. If one thought at all of Annie, it was with the sort of feeling that one thinks of a pretty picture when you have left the gallery in which it is hung.

A day or two after Fanny's night in the 'Market, the diamonds promised her by Gentleman Barton arrived, and she was busily examining them when Annie entered her room.

"Oh, what lovely diamonds!" she cried, running up to the bed, for Fanny was not yet up.

"Do you like them?"

"They are beautiful. Who sent them you,—Carruthers?"

"No. Some other fellow."

"I'm sure I don't know how it is you have such luck, Fanny," cried her friend lugubriously. "It never comes to me. I'm always dying for jewelry, and men don't send me such a lot as you get."

"You don't know how to manage it."

"Perhaps I don't. You'll let me wear these sometimes, won't you?"

"Yes; I don't mind. Look at the centre stone in this bracelet!"

"What a size!"

"Are you going out?"

"Yes; I have an appointment."

"You are not going to wear those colours though," exclaimed Fanny.

"What colours?"

"Why, pink strings, yellow gloves, and a sky-blue silk."

"It's very pretty."

"Is it? I shouldn't like to be seen with you."

"You'd better wait till you're asked, Fauny."

"Oh, I can do that. It won't break my heart."

"You're in the stirrups over your diamonds, it seems," said Aunie angrily.

"Suppose I am. What would you be if you had them?"

"I dare say I could show much better stones than they are."

"Why don't you, then?"

"Wait a bit."

"Oh, don't stand talking and chattering there, like a black-and-white magpie. Go up-stairs and change your gloves and your bonnet, and then I'll talk to you."

"Well, I'm sure, Fanny. You order one about as if all the house belonged to you, and every one in it was your slave," replied Annie in a tone of mild

remonstrance, leaving the room to do as she was told.

"I hate silly fools of women," was Fanny's inward commentary on her disappearance. When Annie May came back again, her attire was more harmonious, and she did not look quite so glaring.

"That's something like," cried Fanny.

"Shall I do?"

"Oh, yes; now you will. I don't mind coming out with you. How are you going?"

"I've ordered the phaeton."

"Wait a bit for me."

"How long shall you be, Fanny? That's always the way with you. You'll be an hour dressing."

"No, I sha'n't—not half an hour. Is the trap here?"

"No. I sent it back.

"What did you do that for?" cried Fanny, jumping out of bed and looking at herself in the glass.

"Because they sent me the piebalds, and I can't bear them."

"That's right. Nothing like being fastidious, and giving people lots of trouble; they think much more of you."

"Do you really think so, Fanny?"

"Of course I do. Did I ever get any thing out of a man in my life without snubbing him?"

"Don't you spoon them over sometimes, Fanny? I do."

"More fool you, then."

"But I know some men who wouldn't stand

snubbing ; they're not all like Carruthers, who seems fond of being dragooned."

"Ring the bell for Rose."

"She's gone out, Fanny."

"What business has she to go out when I want her ?"

"Why, I sent her for some gloves."

"You're always committing some absurdity. Fancy a woman buying her own gloves ! I shall never make any thing of you."

"Look at the lot of gloves I wear, Fanny ; a dozen pair a day sometimes."

"So do I. But did you ever see me buy gloves ?"

"I don't think I did."

"What's your size ?"

"Six and a half ; you know that well enough, Fanny."

"What do you have such big paws for ? If you took sixes, I could set you up. I've a drawer full of sixes. I always let men know my size, and I've gloves enough in consequence to start a shop with, or keep Piver going."

"Oh, Fanny ! how you go on !"

A knock came to the door, and Rose entered. She was popularly supposed to be a cousin of the landlady. She was a fresh-coloured, buxom-looking girl. Fanny was the recipient of her confidence, and knew her to be in love with the chemist round the corner. Rose was very agreeable and willing. There was nothing she would not do for Fanny, who treated her with the greatest kindness, and generally

as an equal. She bullied her occasionally ; but that Rose did not care much for.

"It's devilish odd, Rose, you must go trapesing about after gloves for people when I want you."

"For people !" echoed Annie indignantly. "Well, I'm sure, Fanny—that's just like you."

"I haven't been far," replied Rose.

"Never mind how far you've been. Where's my hot water ? Look alive, and put my things in the bed to warm them. I shall have to cut this place ; I can't get a thing done for me."

"What a pity, Fanny ! Why, every body waits on you, both men and women," remarked Annie.

"What shall you wear to-day ?" asked Rose.

"That white muslin with the flounces."

"The one that was goffered ?"

"Yes. Put it out—and a light-blue sash, and the body trimmed with blue."

"I shall wait down-stairs, Fanny. You don't speak to me, though I'm sure I don't know what I've done to be treated in this way."

"Oh, go down-stairs, do."

"That's always the way with you. I'm sure it's miserable to talk to you, or to be in the same room where you're dressing."

"Why do you do it, then ?"

Annie left the room in a pct.

"Rose," said Fanny.

"Yes, miss ?"

"Have you got any money ?"

"Only a threepenny-bit. What do you want ?"

"Stop Annie."

"Miss Annie!" shouted Rose from the top of the staircase.

"Well? what is it now, Rose? I'm sure I've no peace of my life."

"Come up-stairs again."

"Who wants me?"

"Mrs. Carruthers wants you."

"There, that's just the way with Fanny," grumbled Annie. "She'll tell you to go, and be beastly insulting one moment, and be civil to you the next."

When she reëntered the room, she exclaimed:

"What is it, Fanny? You drive one about as if going up and down stairs was dancing in a ball-room, or eating ices at Motts' "

"I want some money. How much have you got?"

"I've got some."

"Well, give Rose half-a-crown, and let her go for a bottle of gin. I want something to square me up a bit."

"I shouldn't mind a drop of gin. Here, Rose, go and get some."

Rose departed on her errand, and Annie continued:

"Rose isn't half a bad sort, is she?"

"No. She's a brick."

"Do you think she likes me?"

"I don't know; I never asked her."

"She likes you, Fanny."

"I think she does. She'd work for me till she dropped."

"Why is it every one likes you?"

"Now, look here, Annie: if you stand jawing there, I'll give a sender and pitch you out of the window," cried Fanny. "You'd chatter any body to death, you would."

"That's just what I say of you, Fanny,—one can't depend on you; and it's too bad, after I've sent for the gin and all."

"Oh! drink your gin—I don't want it!"

Annie put her pocket-handkerchief up to her eyes and began to cry, muttering, between her sobs, "It's very hard I can't speak."

Fanny went on dressing, and was soon decked out in gorgeous array, like the daughter of the respected gentleman in the ballad who had found her an eligible suitor, both gallant and gay, in the person of one Villikins, otherwise Wilkins.

Annie May's great point was her skill in driving; and her bitterest enemy could not deny that she drove remarkably well. Hers was the dashing, showy style of driving. Her wrists were very strong, and she could control the most impetuous pair of horses that ever came out of a stable.

With that strange volatility which women who pursue a life of pleasure possess in a marked degree, Fanny Carruthers had not given her father a thought since the interview which had some time ago taken place between them. She always argued, that if he had kept his home in a proper condition, and looked after her with parental care, she would not have been where she was, or in a position which, however careless she might be externally about it, did not carry

with it the social status she would have preferred had she been free to choose for herself.

As the two women drove along the roads leading to the Park, they were both of them like giddy flies basking in the sunshine; not a care disturbed their serenity or peace of mind. Fanny thought of the diamonds, and was happy. Annie thought of her equipage, flattering herself she was driving well enough to excite the attentive admiration of the Corydons she passed, and was contented. It does not take much to make a woman happy. Pet her and be kind to her, give her a new dress, or make her a present of something you know she will like, and you will dissipate the thickest clouds that ever gathered over her unreflective and slightly frivolous mind.

"Did you not say you had to meet some fellow?" asked Fanny of her friend, as they entered the Park-gates near Apsley House.

"Yes," replied Annie, touching up her horse in a delicate manner.

"Who is he?"

"I don't know."

"That's just your way of doing things. Why, I'll bet I find out who a fellow is before I've been talking to him ten minutes."

"You've a way of doing it, Fanny."

"So might you have, if you chose to try."

"I'll lay you something, though, you don't get much out of this fellow."

"Shall I try?"

"I suppose you want to take my man away?" exclaimed Annie suspiciously.

"God help us!"

"Well, it's just what women say of you."

"Look there," said Fanny.

"Where?"

"To your right; there is some fellow bowing and scraping to you."

"That's him."

"Is it?"

"Yes. Is there any thing ungrammatical about that? You're always finding fault, Fanny. I'm sure it's a misery."

"Hold your row, and mind where you're driving; you'll be into that brougham in a second."

By a dexterous jerk at the right rein Annie contrived to avoid a collision which certainly was imminent, and to pull up by the roadside, where a handsome pale-faced young man was standing. His features were very determined, and there was an expression about his hard gray eyes which indicated that if he could not achieve his ends by fair means, he would not object to the use of cunning to assist him in gaining them. He spoke first.

"I suppose it is too much to expect a lady to keep an appointment with punctuality?"

"It was not my fault, Charley."

"Charley!" interrupted Fanny, with her characteristic rudeness. "Why don't you call the poor man by his name?"

"Because I don't know it, Fanny. I told you so coming along."

The young man looked at Fanny and smiled. She returned his glance with an expression of coun-

tenance which said plainly enough, "Isn't she a fool!"

"What is your name, old fellow?" continued Fanny. "I always like to know who I'm talking to."

"So do I," he replied quietly.

"Who do you think I am?"

"I really cannot venture to form an opinion without your permission."

"Oh, go a-head."

"Are you the great Skittles?"

"Skittles! I can't make out what on earth men can see in her. She can't write her own name even. When I was at Aldershot with her, I used to write all her letters. I wouldn't speak to her through a brick wall!"

"Oh, don't say that. Pyramus was not so particular with Thisbe, or half so cruel."

"If you want to talk to Skittles, you had better go and look after her."

"I am not desirous of the honour; but in obedience to your commands I would do any thing, and undergo even that degradation."

"Don't, Fanny, I say, you'll offend him," whispered Annie in her friend's ear.

"Good job too," was the surly reply.

"Are you one of the Skittles family? I hear that some of the sisters—I sincerely trust I do not scandalise those virtuous young ladies—are coming out."

"Are they going to Court?"

"I should think so. It is not a difficult matter to achieve nowadays; but I am unable to tell you the precise day when the presentation will take place."

"That's a mistake !" said Fanny Carruthers bluntly, "if it's any satisfaction to you to know it ; for to my certain knowledge Skittles hasn't got any sisters."

"I am very glad to be put right," he replied. "Do you know I should recommend you to compile a sort of guide, or 'Who's Who,' for the benefit of men about town. It would be a great success."

"Tell me who you are, old fellow, and I'll do it, if only for the sake of immortalising you."

"It's very unkind of Skittles not to have any sisters, if only for my sake," said the stranger, avoiding her question.

"I shall drive on, Fanny," exclaimed her friend.

"Drive wherever you like."

"Won't you take me with you?" asked the young man.

"Yes, jump up," said Annie ; but Fanny cried, "Certainly not. I don't choose to be seen with anonymous men."

"Never mind," he replied ; "two women in a phaeton are nothing wonderful."

This remark proceeded from the coarseness which was inherent in his nature. Although his face was that of a decently bred man, there was a fierce gleam in his eyes now and then which showed that, although he could be amiable and agreeable, he could also be as coarse as a certain Lord Chancellor, who in that particular branch of polite learning called swearing was without an equal on the bench or away from it, if any credence may be placed in the statements of his biographers and contemporaries.

"Oh, so you object to two women in a phaeton?"

"You may place what construction you like upon my words."

Fanny Carruthers snatched the whip from the trembling hands of her friend, and laid the lash heavily twice in quick succession on the young man's back, exclaiming, "That's the construction I choose to put upon it! Do you see that, old fellow?"

He removed to a decent distance, but did not evince the slightest symptom of pain, or of being put out.

"My name's Fanny Carruthers; and if you like to pull me up for hiding you, you can send the summons to the crescent where Annie May lives. Drive on, Annie."

The stranger raised his hat with marked politeness to Annie, and walked quickly on, the cynosure of a hundred eyes.

The phaeton rattled along at a respectable pace, and Fanny exclaimed, "That does not look much like taking your man away, does it?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's just as good. He won't speak to me again if I go about with women who slip into men like you do."

"Well, what of it?"

"A great deal."

"If you say much more, I'll serve you the same."

"Oh, Fanny! that is just like you; and I'm sure I don't know what I've done, but you always go on at me as if I were the greatest beast that ever lived."

"So you are, sometimes."

They progressed some little way in silence. Suddenly Fanny saw a man whom she knew who was driving a mail phaeton, something like their own.

"Drive slowly," she exclaimed; "you want some gloves—I'll get you some."

The man in the phaeton pulled up, and lifted his hat. Fanny bowed and smiled in return.

"I hardly expected to see you in the Park," he exclaimed.

"Why not?"

"I thought you were at Goodwood, perhaps."

"I don't care about races."

"Are you tired of them?"

"I'm tired of every thing—tired of my life, tired of Cremorne and those places—beastly tired; hate the sight of them. I'm so sick of them. I think I shall marry a curate, and settle down."

"Oh, don't do that."

"Why? Give me a reason."

"You would be such a loss to the service. Has Carruthers gone to Goodwood?"

"He has, I believe; and I shall be very glad to see you during his absence."

"You are very kind. Which way are you going?"

"To Regent Street."

"Shopping, as usual?"

"As it happens, I am not going shopping. I want some gloves."

"Is not that shopping?"

"Certainly not. It's only a trumpery affair. Shopping is buying a lot of shawls and things."

"The consumption of gloves amongst ladies must be very great."

"Why shouldn't it be?"

"I wonder if they are any good after being worn once? Do they make paper of them?"

"How should I know? I'm not a paper-maker. Are you in that line?"

"No, thank God! never gave change over a counter."

"Well, if we are talking of paper, it's no reason why we should be stationary. Suppose we move on?"

"By all means."

"Come to Piver's. I was looking out for a victim."

"I shall be delighted to be victimised to any extent."

"We'll take the lead, then; you follow behind." Annie drove on again.

"Who is that?" she said.

"Watkins, of the —th."

"Oh, I've met him at Lizzie Davis's, I think."

"Very likely. He is always knocking about somewhere when he's got leave."

The two vehicles pulled up at the glove-shop simultaneously. Watkins threw the reins to his groom, sprang upon the pavement, and assisted Fanny to alight, afterwards giving his arm to her friend.

An obsequious Frenchman in the shop gave the ladies a chair, and Watkins placed himself close to Fanny, and leant over the counter so as to be able to talk to her in a low tone of voice.

"Why do you drive about with that woman?" he asked.

"Because it suits me."

"That's conclusive."

"Besides, it saves me trouble."

"I should have thought her the greatest stick in London."

"So she is; but I like sticks."

"Really!"

"Yes; they show me off."

"I hoped that you would have taken a seat in my trap."

"I don't mind doing that."

"Will you?"

"Yes; but I must get rid of Annie. Buy two or three dozen pairs of gloves, will you?"

"What size?"

"Six and a half."

"Oh!" he exclaimed.

"Why do you say 'Oh'?"

"You ought to be ashamed of wearing such a size."

"Suppose they are not for me?" she replied.

"Who are they for, then? I don't see the fun of buying gloves for other people, or for people I don't care about."

"Not to get rid of them?"

"That makes a difference. What elephant are they intended to fit?"

Fanny pointed to her friend, and Watkins smiled assentingly.

When the gloves were chosen, and all the diffi-

culties about the shades finally arranged and settled, Fanny said, "You are going home, Annie, are you not?"

"Yes; why?"

"Because you can take the gloves for me."

"Won't you come too?"

"I can't; I am going for a drive."

"Oh, all right, Fanny; only you might have told me, I think."

Annie flounced out of the place, and Fanny said to Watkins, "Go and see the woman into her trap."

He stood still.

"Go on."

"I'd rather not. Men I know might think I was talking to her."

"Oh, never mind that; go along."

He did as he was told—assisted Annie into her carriage, and presently drove off with Fanny.

Fanny settled herself comfortably on the cushions, and said, "You may smoke; I don't mind."

"Thanks," he replied; "I don't—excuse me—I don't exactly see it in the middle of the day."

"Oh, nonsense! I've known better men than you smoke in the middle of the day."

"Possibly."

"Well, then—"

"I like to be eccentric."

"Did I tell you I had the extreme pleasure and satisfaction of hiding a man in the Park this morning?" exclaimed Fanny.

"I think not. What had he done?"

"Quite enough. Told me he didn't think much of two women in a phaeton."

"Was he sorry he spoke?"

"No, took it coolly enough ; never so much as shook himself."

"Did you hurt him?"

"Not much."

"Lucky beggar!"

When Fanny Carruthers was tired of driving about, she requested Mr. Watkins to take her home. He did so with alacrity, and accompanied her into the house. Rose met Fanny on the threshold, and exclaimed, "There's a gentleman up-stairs."

"Who?"

"I don't know."

"Did he give any name?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"Mr. Anonymous."

"That's no name at all."

"That's all he said."

Fanny ascended the stair, wondering who on earth her visitor could be. Watkins overtook her on the landing, and said hastily, "If there is any one here, I shall be in your way."

"Not a bit, my dear fellow," she replied. "If there's any one in my place, it won't take me long to start him."

They entered the drawing-room together. Fanny stood still with astonishment when she saw the man whom she had abused and beaten in the Park that morning sitting coolly in an arm-chair, and looking

at her photographic album, while he held a cigar in his mouth.

"Who asked you to come here?" she exclaimed.

"You were kind enough to give me an invitation," he replied.

"I!"

"Yes."

"Have you brought the summons?"

"I haven't it with me; but it's coming, I believe."

The stranger caught sight of Fanny's companion, and exclaimed, "Ah, Watkins, how are you?"

"Wormald, by Jove!" muttered Watkins.

"Well, I'm glad you know one another," said Fanny. "It will do away with the anonymity, or whatever you call it."

Watkins shook hands with the stranger, and Fanny began to think that she stood on the threshold of an adventure.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT BECAME OF MILLY.

INTO the street, with a strange wildness in her eyes, went Milly. She walked along like one in a dream. She hardly knew whither she walked, and I am certain she did not care. She was well dressed, and loaded with jewelry, and she had money in her pocket, and people who passed her on the footway wondered to themselves what cause so gaily dressed a woman could have for sorrow or for care. Sorrow

was for those without a sixpence, who hadn't a dress to their backs, not for such as her; care was for the destitute, the houseless. Shallow reasoners! The sufferings of the mind are ever greater and more acute than those of the body.

Her walk was unsteady. A strange feeling of vertigo took possession of her head, and she feared to faint. Looking up, she saw a confectioner's shop close to her; without hesitation she entered it, and sat down on the first chair which claimed her attention. One of the assistants—for a wonder, civil to a member of her own sex—seeing what was the matter, advanced with a glass of water, saying, "Take some water, ma'am; you will feel better. Allow me to raise your veil."

But Milly plucked up courage and resolution at this, and exclaimed, "No, no. I shall be better presently. Thank you for the water. Put it down."

She would not have had her veil raised for the world. It would, if lifted, have revealed John Barton's brutality in all its naked hideousness. She hated herself to think that she should have submitted to so great an indignity at the hands of such a man.

"Poor thing!" said the girl behind the counter to a friend; "the heat's too much for her."

"And no wonder," replied the other. "It's that hot I'm fit to melt."

Milly's lips moved. She was talking to herself. "Never, never, never again," she was saying; "not for worlds, for universes, would I ever press my lips to his again. He has severed the slender cord which

bound me to him. Words I could have forgiven ; but a blow—never ! What shall I do ? What is there for such as I am to do ? I cannot go back to my old life. I feel a repugnance for it. It is so hollow and so unreal. I cannot again submit to its thousand degradations. I would rather die. Die ! Dare I die ? The water is cool and smooth and deep. A plunge—a little plunge—and all is over. This side of the grave, at least. But the awakening ! Oh, would that there were no awakening ! then could I die, and be in peace. I am cast out from those who have never sinned. I have fastened a weight round my neck with chains that I cannot break, and I find it heavier than a mill-stone. How sweet it would be to die young ! If I were to vanish like a summer flower now, all who knew me would say : ‘ She died in her youth, and she was beautiful. It is sad to think she was cut off prematurely.’ Beautiful ! What would they say now ? My poor battered face would tell them how degraded I am, and how low I have fallen. Oh, those blows, those blows, those blows ! they seem to burn into my flesh, as if they had been inflicted with a red-hot mallet. I fancy I can feel the hissing iron eating its way into my flesh. My God ! it is a wonder that I am not mad.”

The water revived her, and her blood coursed so fiercely through her veins that she felt it impossible to sit still. Rising from her chair, she threw half-a-crown upon the counter, and hurriedly left the shop. The girls were in the utmost astonishment at her reckless prodigality ; they were not in the

habit of entertaining many customers who paid half-a-crown for a glass of water, and went away without asking for any change.

Milly did not care about their marvelling : what was money to her, in her perturbed state of mind ? She would have squandered a gold-mine, and thought nothing of it. Incontinently she wandered towards some of her old haunts ; but when she perceived the locality in which she was, she corrected her error, turned back with a shudder, and walked in another direction.

She is in the Strand now, and a dense crowd is pressing in at the portals of a large building. She is amidst the throng before she is aware of the fact, and carried by the impetuous rush into the midst of a spacious hall. Oh ! such long rows of benches, one above the other, higher, higher, and higher still, until the seats, in what very much resembles a vast amphitheatre of the Augustan period, when Rome was great and mighty, rise up to the very ceiling. There is no ornamentation here—no fret-work, no gilding, no meretricious adornment ; all is plain and simple, giving the beholder the idea of grandeur through its very simplicity. Yes, it is grand. There is that about this huge hall which is imposing and magnificent. It appeals to the senses by its tremendous area, and yet its formation is admirably adapted for acoustic purposes. The hall is filled—filled to suffocation ; and Milly is settled quietly in a seat, in the midst of many others. Much she wonders where she is, and whispers to one man near her, “ Will you please tell me where I am ? ”

"Do you not know?" replies the man, with a stern, Puritan cast of face.

"No, indeed, or I should not ask."

"This is Exeter Hall."

"Oh!"

Milly had never heard of Exeter Hall. What was it; and why was all this concourse gathered together? What had they come out for to see? A reed shaken by the wind? Surely not!

"What is Exeter Hall?" she continued.

"To-night it is a house of God," replies the man solemnly.

"A church?"

"A primitive temple, if you will, but not a religious edifice consecrated by ecclesiastical hands."

"And who are all these people?"

"Let us hope, Christians."

"It is a church, then!"

"Again, no. I tell you, it is no church in the common sense of the word; but every place is a church where two or three earnest ones are gathered together."

"Is there to be preaching?"

"God willing, there is."

Milly gave vent to a weary sigh. She had unwittingly intruded upon a scene uncongenial to her thoughts, her habits, and her way of living. She wished that she could be in the open street once more.

But there was no escape from that densely packed assemblage. And see, the preacher makes his appearance upon a platform in front of an organ, and several men in black surround him, standing up and

holding books in their hands. He must be one of the shining lights of the church to which he belongs; his fame must have travelled through the land, as if adamantine lungs had blown it through a brazen trumpet.

Milly began to comprehend that some great apostle of the Evangelical Church was about to preach to his disciples. In other words, that some famous Dissenter had been advertised to address a meeting, and those who admired him had congregated to listen to his words.

They sang, first of all. These Dissenters sang a short hymn, prettily put together, running easily, and illustrative of some event in the history of the founder of their faith. They sang slightly out of tune; but then the organ was a sounding one, and it drowned these little choral discrepancies. The music seemed wild and rugged to Milly's well-tutored ears, but it was not without its charm. Her Puritan friend offered half of a hymn-book. She took it diffidently, keeping her eyes downcast on the page, and reading the words as the people sang them; but not daring to join aloud in the demonstration of praise, though her tiny voice would have been lost in the diapason.

The singing over, every one resumed his seat and settled himself comfortably, as people always do when they are going to listen to a discourse, whether in the House of Commons, a court of law, or a Dissenters' hall.

The gentleman who was about to preach advanced to the edge of the platform, and leant one

arm upon a railing which was erected to prevent any danger of falling. Milly was a long way off, and she thought him in the distance dim and speck-like. She could hardly discern his features, but he was evidently a man acquainted with all the stock-in-trade of those who successfully appeal to large audiences, and know how to enchain the attention of a large body of spectators. He gathered his gown about him, and gazed at the people for a few seconds. There was a dead silence. The chirp of a cricket might have been distinctly heard throughout that vast area. Raising his hand solemnly, he uttered a benediction in a low voice. Then he selected his text, and discarding notes or help of any kind, began one of the most fervid, glowing, eloquent, and truly passionate appeals that ever those time-honoured walls had rung an applauding echo to. He did not disclaim dramatic effect; on the contrary, he employed it largely; and why? Because he knew that it gave him power over his listeners. Milly paid, in spite of herself, the deepest attention to every word that he said. A gracious evangel was sounding in her ears, and a new feeling—altogether a new feeling—took possession of her poor barren heart, long ago blighted by a hard frost, but now inclined to throw out some tender shoots beneath this new sun, whose beams were already melting the icicles which encrusted its tendrils, and working their way into those ice-bound chambers where nothing but sin and sorrow had fructified for many and many a weary year. Never since she was a child, kneeling at her mother's lap and lisping

her infant prayers, had she experienced a similar sensation. What could it be? Early in that very day, only half a dozen hours—a brief time—ago, she would have laughed to scorn any one who had told her that she would “turn pious,” or even find herself within the precincts of a chapel.

He who spoke was a plain-dealing man, and a just man. You could see it in all he said; and the conviction that he was actuated by no sordid motive, gained him the ear of his audience as much almost as his fervid eloquence. He did not live in hopes of fat livings or bishoprics. He had a small circle of friends in the country, who gave him enough to live upon in comfort in return for his kindly ministrations. He might have been well off, courted, feted, caressed by the rich and great; but he disdained all earthly rewards, and looked for his hereafter.

Milly could not shut her ears or close her heart any longer against the gracious words which pealed forth in quick succession, like the notes of a dulcimer. She drew her lace-edged pocket-handkerchief from the bosom of her dress, and putting it to her face underneath her veil, with one hysteric sob burst into tears. The Puritan looked at her with a gratified expression. It was a triumph for the Dissenting minister, and consequently a triumph for him, being a member of the flock. The stone had hit its mark, for the slinger was skilful. The arrow had gone home. The shot had told. The aim was unerring. One of the ungodly had given signs of bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. Oh,

yes, it was a triumph. No one, however, took much notice of poor Milly. It was a common thing for women—and men too, for the matter of that—to be moved to tears by the eloquence of the man who was speaking. He not only knew what to say, but he knew how to say it.

So she wept on in silence, and undisturbed.

Weep, poor sorrow-laden child! it will ease your over-burdened heart. Tears are good for the miserable; the briny waters of the soul bring relief in their train.

All her past life rushed like a flood over her mind, and the sudden Nile-like inundation made her confess how sadly she had misspent some of her best years. Some, but not all. No; not all. Thank Heaven for that. She was yet young, and might live to be grateful to John Barton for brutally ill-treating her as he had done. How fast her tears fell! She was like a penitent at a Revival meeting; only not quite so extravagant in her grief. But those tears were like summer rain upon the parched ground and the arid soil; they watered the newly sown seeds, and nourished the freshly sprouting germs that the last half-hour had impregnated in her breast. The seed had been sown—that was unquestionable. But would it endure? Where had it fallen?—by the roadside? amongst stony places? Would thorns spring up and choke it? That was a question impossible to answer in a moment. It was a strange sight to see Milly sitting in the great, wide, and spacious hall, with her head bowed and her back bent, sobbing and crying as if she were a

small child under punishment. Not a word of the preacher's was lost upon her. Every syllable he uttered sank down into her newly awakened heart and germinated there. She was not the only one in that densely crowded hall who gave way to tears ; there were many like her, many similarly affected.

Ah ! listen to him now. How sublime he is ! Hark, how his voice swells and roars ! But there is no ranting there. The next moment he sinks, with soft modulation, into a cadence low and gentle. He has struck terror into the heart of the evil-doer, and now he speaks of balm in Gilead and bids him hope.

What ! is it over so soon ? Soon ! he has been speaking for more than an hour ; but there is not one amongst his audience who does not think his discourse too short.

Milly does not move, does not offer to rise. She hears the people round about her singing again. That comes to an end. Then there is a profound silence, only broken by solemn, earnest words, which well up from the soul of the man who has just finished his ministration. He is dismissing the congregation, and giving them his blessing.

A noise of many people rising, feet grating against the dusty boards, voices speaking in praise of the preacher, men moving towards the door. They do not speak to Milly. They think she is praying, and they respect her devotions.

Praying ! Well, if she is an outcast, is she worse than a murderer, a forger, a poisoner, a thief ? Ransack your Bible—ransack the chronicles of your saints—ransack the works of your sacred writers—

and I will venture to say you do not find one word which will enable you, with any sense of justice, to place her offence on a level with theirs. What she has done is venial in comparison with desecration of the Sabbath, cursing a father or mother, worshiping of images, slaying a fellow-creature, committing adultery, stealing, coveting your neighbour's wife, bearing false witness against your neighbour. What special commandment is there applicable to her case? St. Paul the apostle, in his writings, condemns her, and she is willing to number herself amongst the heathen. So we will not plunge into polemics.

The noise gradually grows less and less, and then ceases. Still she does not move; her handkerchief is saturated with her tears, and a few have fallen on the hard floor, dotting it as if the rain had penetrated through the roof and fallen therefrom.

The hall is nearly empty and deserted now. The congregation has departed; a few attendants are busily engaged in shutting doors and putting the place to rights. One, however, sees her. It is the man who preached so eloquently a short time ago. He stands on the platform. He has been into the vestry and taken off his gown; bands he has none. He beckons to an attendant, and says, "Who is that?" pointing to Milly as he speaks.

"A lady, by her dress, sir. I did not like to disturb her."

"Is she engaged in devotion?"

"She is crying, sir; for I heard her."

"I will go to her," said the preacher, whom we will call Mr. Halifax.

He was familiar with such cases, and always stayed behind to see if he could administer consolation to those whom his words had affected.

He crossed the interminable rows of benches, and touched Milly on the shoulder. She raised her head, and encountered his speaking eyes fixed full upon her. He had no occasion to ask her what was the matter in so many words; his glance spoke the question for him.

"I am very miserable," Milly said, lowering her eyes again.

"Since when have you been miserable?"

"Since I came here."

"Do you regret your coming?"

He spoke in a kindly tone, which reassured her.

"I cannot tell yet; but I know that I was happier before I listened to you."

"Why are you miserable?"

"Because I am wicked."

"There is such a thing as forgiveness."

"For me!"

"Certainly. For you—for any one whose penitence is sincere."

"For me!" repeated Milly musingly.

"What have you done?" asked Mr. Halifax.

"I beg of you not to think me intrusive or inquisitive; I only ask you with a view to mitigate the distress you are evidently suffering, and not from a curious or unworthy motive."

"I am sure of that."

"Will you tell me what it is that weighs upon your mind?"

"I cannot tell you."

"In that case I will not press you."

There was a pause.

"Do not think me harsh or unkind," Mr. Halifax continued, "but I must ask you to move, because the attendants are going to close the hall. The service is over for this evening. See, they are even lowering the gas."

He walked away; but Milly called after him, saying, "Do not leave me."

"Of what service can I be to you?"

"I do not know what to do. This is a crisis in my life. It is in your power to save me."

"To save you? From what?"

"From myself—from temptation—from a world which I wish to quit."

"Be frank with me," replied Mr. Halifax, "and I will do all I can to help you."

"Come nearer to me."

He did so.

"I must whisper to you. I cannot bear to hear my own lips proclaim what I am."

She spoke in a low tone for several minutes to Mr. Halifax, and at the end of her confession—for it was little else—he said, "What can I do for you? Let me see. You have acted wisely in making me your confidant. Have you any place you could go to to-night?"

"If I once leave you, I shall. I am sure, never see you again."

"Why not?"

"Because I shall be engulfed by my own pursuits. I have been brought in contact with you in a most singular manner. It is for you to say whether the contact shall be barren of results. I appeal to you to save me."

Mr. Halifax ruminated a minute or so; then he said, "Is your penitence sincere?"

"I hope and trust so."

"Will you go into a 'Home'?"

She hesitated.

"Will you work for your living?"

"In what way?"

"Not as a governess—I could not venture to introduce you into any family in so important a position until I know more of you—but as a common servant. Will you do this for a time?"

"I will," she replied firmly, as a sudden glow irradiated her countenance.

"You are in earnest?"

"Perfectly so."

"William!" exclaimed Mr. Halifax.

The attendant who had formerly spoken to the minister, and called his attention to Milly in the first instance, came up.

"Call a cab, and put on your hat and coat; I shall want you."

Milly's new-born faith was so powerful, that she imagined she should be strong and firm enough to go through all the petty miseries consequent upon a position in which she would have to undertake the part of a domestic servant—miseries which would be

inexpressibly galling to her proud spirit. She was full of ardour at present ; the reaction had to come.

The cab arrived, and Mr. Halifax put her inside, telling William to follow and sit by her side, while he himself sat on the front seat, and talked to her in a kind tone, which did much to reassure her and reconcile her to her altered circumstances. The cab drove to Clapham, where Mr. Halifax lived with his wife. His house was a small one, and in a back street ; but a few flowers in a neatly kept garden proclaimed to those who passed by that its possessor was not devoid of taste.

Milly stood tremblingly in the passage, where Mr. Halifax desired her to wait while he spoke to his wife.

Mrs. Halifax was a lady of a prepossessing cast of countenance, but by no means handsome ; she was the mother of four children, and a little more than thirty years of age ; rather strict and precise, but not a bad mistress to those who took the trouble to understand her.

"Hannah," exclaimed Mr. Halifax, "I have brought you a new servant."

"A new one !"

"Yes. You know I promised you I would, as soon as I got a chance. The girl we have now is not strong enough for the work, and you exert yourself too much."

"I do my best," she replied, with a sigh of resignation.

"You always do that, my own," he said, pressing her hand affectionately.

"Where is this new servant?"

"In the passage."

"You brought her with you, then?"

"I did; but there is something about her of which I must give you warning."

"What is that?"

"I hope you will not think I have done wrong in introducing such a person to you."

"Such a person, Henry! What *do* you mean?"

"Only this. She has been living a bad life."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Halifax, with a prolonged respiration. "Your preaching has converted her, I suppose? Is it not the old story?" she added.

"If you choose to call it so. She appears to be very penitent."

"Why not send her to a refuge for fallen women?"

"She objected to that."

"That is very likely; but she should remember she has brought her punishment on herself."

"Will you not, in Christian charity, lend her a helping hand, Hannah?" Mr. Halifax replied pleadingly. "It may do violence to your feelings; but I need not tell you how hard it will be for her to work her way back to respectability, and how much she will appreciate your kindness. Will you have her?"

"I suppose I must; but if any thing goes wrong, do not blame me. I shall be very strict with her."

"Shall I call her in?"

"Yes. I am ready to see her."

Mr. Halifax left the room, and sent Milly into his wife, while he went to pay the cabman.

Mrs. Halifax was much surprised as Milly entered the room. She had no idea that the new convert would be a stylishly dressed woman; she had expected to see some dirty drab, but here was a lady in appearance, much better dressed, and with more taste, than the parson's wife had ever been.

"She shall soon have those off," she muttered to herself, with a little womanly vexation.

"So you want to go into service?" exclaimed Mrs. Halifax.

"If you please," replied Milly timidly.

"It is usual," said Mrs. Halifax reprovingly, "for servants to address their mistresses as ma'am, which is a corruption or abbreviation of the word madam, and consequently a title of respect."

"Yes, ma'am," said Milly, passing under the yoke.

"What is your name?"

"Milly."

"What wages do you expect, Milly?"

"I don't know, ma'am; I must leave that to you."

"Very well, I shall give you half-a-crown a week; tea and sugar found, and washing put out. Will that do? And I shall engage you by the week, so that if you do not suit me no formal notice will be necessary."

"Thank you, ma'am."

"Now come up-stairs with me, Milly, and change your things. You need not do much to-

night. I shall give you an old cotton dress of mine, and I will allow you to go out to-morrow to sell the things you have on. You will be able to buy yourself a respectable wardrobe with the proceeds. Come ; follow me."

Milly followed Mrs. Halifax up-stairs, waited a little time in that lady's bedroom while she selected some common linen and the cotton dress she spoke of, and then followed her to an uncomfortable-looking attic, where she was to sleep.

It was with a pardonable feeling of regret that Milly unrobed herself, taking off her handsome and elegant things, her worked petticoats, and the like ; but she did take them off, and threw them on the floor.

"You will wear no crinoline," exclaimed Mrs. Hannah Halifax ; "I do not allow it. Take those earrings out of your ears, and give me those rings and that bracelet. They will be quite safe with me."

It was almost dark in the attic ; but Mrs. Halifax lighted a candle, and then, for the first time, perceived the state of Milly's face, which was very much swollen and disfigured.

"Good gracious me, child ! how, in the name of goodness, did that happen ?" she exclaimed. "Have you been fighting ?"

"No," replied Milly. "A man struck me."

"A strange man ?"

"The man I lived with."

"Ah ! I have heard of the wages of sin, but here indeed the saying is practically exemplified. How shocking ! Did you provoke him ?—but never

mind if you did, no provocation could justify such treatment. Give me your veil and your bonnet. Dear me! Maltese lace. How extravagant! Is this how you always dress?"

"Oh, no!" replied Milly; "I was only dressed for walking."

"How heavy this silk dress is! Was it expensive?"

"I gave ten pounds for it."

"Ten pounds! Dear me, what a quantity of money!"

"Give me your watch and chain," she resumed.

"We must divorce you from the past as much as possible, and prevent your dwelling upon vain things. That ring does not come off easily, I see. Rub a little soap on the finger. There, that is better. How heavy your watch and chain are! What extravagance! Dear me! Vice is, indeed, pampered. Have you any money?"

"Not much."

"A few shillings?"

"Oh, yes! Probably thirty or forty pounds; I seldom have less in my purse. There it is. Take it and count it."

"I will take care of it for you," replied Mrs. Halifax, opening the purse Milly tendered her, and reckoning up the contents.

"Two Bank-of-England notes for ten pounds each, one for five, twelve sovereigns and seven half-sovereigns, together with fifteen shillings in silver. Why, you are quite rich, child!"

"Oh! that is nothing," said Milly; "I could

leave this house now, and come back to you before six hours have elapsed with fifty times as much as that."

"How remarkable ! You must be conscientious."

"You cannot think otherwise. If I were not serious in my determination of leading a new life, from pure conviction, I should not be here now, and doing what I am, and ready to do what you will set me to do to-morrow, and while I remain in your service."

"That is very true. Are you accomplished—educated, and all that?" continued Mrs. Halifax.

"I was at a boarding-school for six years."

"Can you speak foreign languages?"

"French, I can speak ; and I have a smattering of German, which language I can read very well."

"And translate?"

"Oh, yes !"

"Can you play?"

"I play the piano, the harmonium, and the harp," replied Milly.

"Dear me, how extraordinary !" exclaimed Mrs. Halifax. "Who are your parents?"

"You must excuse me, ma'am, for not replying to that question."

"Oh ! certainly. I was not aware—that is—pray, excuse me."

She collected the trinkets in her black-satin apron, and said : "When you are dressed, come down to the kitchen. Sarah is there, and she will show you where to keep your plates, and saucepans, and knives and forks. As it is late, you need not

wash up to-night ; but I should like you to wait at table. I shall expect you to get up at six every morning, and clean your steps and sweep the rooms, as we breakfast at eight, and have prayers a quarter of an hour before. I shall only keep Sarah till the week is up ; so you must make the most of her while she stays."

Mrs. Halifax left the room, and Milly was alone.

When she had dressed herself, she raised the candle and looked at herself in the glass ; but she turned away with a cry of alarm. What with her bruised face and her strange and dowdy attire, she was a sorry spectacle. Her thick, long, glossy black hair was the only redeeming trait in her appearance.

As she went down-stairs, the tallow from the candle dripped on to her white hands and sent a thrill of disgust through her frame. A fresh trial awaited her in the kitchen.

" Oh ! here you are, Milly," exclaimed Mrs. Halifax ; " just take this cap, and keep it on ; a pin will hold it."

She did as she was told, with an obedient " Yes, ma'am "—and her metamorphosis was complete. She was beginning to find out how hard it is to be good.

CHAPTER VIII.

WORMALD.

FANNY CARRUTHERS was not a woman to stand upon ceremony. The man whom she had horse-whipped in the Park had paid her a visit, as if to compliment her on her performance, which was

more masculine than elegant or ladylike. Seeing that Watkins was acquainted with him, she determined to turn the circumstance to account.

"Since you seem to know one another," she exclaimed, "perhaps you will introduce this gentleman, Mr. Watkins, to me."

"Don't you know him already?"

"Very casually."

"Mr. Wormald—Mrs. Carruthers," said Watkins.

Wormald bowed with a sort of mock humility; and Fanny gave him a supercilious nod. Going to the window, she beckoned to Watkins, saying:

"Come here; I want you."

He approached her.

"Who is your friend?"

"I am not aware that he is any thing."

"How do you know him? I have always seen you with very swell men."

"He is well connected, and well off."

"Oh! I shouldn't have thought it. That's the man I whacked in the Park. It's cool of him to give me a look up afterwards, isn't it?"

"Rather."

"Has Wormald a profession?"

"No. He is, I believe, a University man, and has been in the militia."

"That's not saying much."

"He is an only son, and an orphan."

"That ought to make him interesting."

"Does it not?"

"Chaff him. Draw him out, if you can," said Fanny.

"He's not the sort of man to be chaffed, I assure you," replied Watkins.

"I'll try him, if you won't. I believe you are afraid of him," she cried impetuously.

"It is very hot," observed Wormald, as she approached him.

"What a profound remark!" she exclaimed, with a smile.

"I should have thought the contrary; but as you declare it to be so, I will not question its profundity," he replied quietly.

"If I had only known you were coming, I would have had the room iced. It is a pity you did not telegraph. I cannot tell you how sorry I am you do not approve of the atmosphere. The clerk of the weather ought to be ashamed of himself."

"He ought, unquestionably," said Wormald, who was biding his time.

"Have you any thing to drink in the house?" he resumed.

"Oh, yes! Water, and ginger-beer, and, I think, some raspberry-vinegar. Which would you like?" she replied.

"I will have some water, if I may so far trespass on your kindness."

Fanny rang the bell, and the servant brought some water.

Wormald took a small flask from his pocket, and, while she was not looking, filled the glass up with brandy.

When she noticed the transformation, she could not help uttering a cry of astonishment.

"Miracles are not quite out of date," he remarked.

Fanny's face flushed at the idea of being outwitted. Acting, as usual, upon impulse, she seized the glass and emptied it under the fire-grate, saying, "If you wanted brandy-and-water, why didn't you say so?"

"Not a bad shot," observed Wormald. "Now I'll lay something that your friend of the phaeton wouldn't have done it half so well?"

"My 'friend of the phaeton' only made one mistake in her life."

"Only one?"

"That was, picking you up. If every one hated cads as much as I do, there wouldn't be one alive."

"Let us get up an agitation on the subject of cads; shall we? What do you say, Watkins? Shall I get the Carlton to bring in a bill for the abolition of cads throughout her Majesty's dominions?"

"Abolish yourself, first of all," said Fanny.

"With great pleasure. How is the process of abolition to be effected? Shall I extirpate myself morally or physically?"

"Both."

"I think the dreadful deed ought to be done in the dead of night, when the long-winged bat is flying in circles, and the blinking owl boo-hooing in a hollow tree. I shall require a little time to make my will and put my affairs in order, and bid a sad adieu to my sorrowing relations."

"Oh, don't alarm yourself; no one will miss you."

"I am not very sure in my own mind about that," replied Wormald. "Now, there is my washer-woman. I bought her a new mangle the other day, for which act of kindness she was good enough to express herself grateful. There is my valet, whom I allow to rob me with impunity; and there is a little woman whom I have started in life. Probably, Mrs. Carruthers, you would not find me much of a loss to the polite society of which you are so decided an ornament. But, with all submission to your lovely and accomplished self, you are not every body, if you do live in a crescent with an air of long-suffering and blue-monldiness about it, and wear diamonds in the middle of the day, and sacrifice brandy-and-water to the irascible impulse of the unconsidered moment."

"I'll tell you what I am," she exclaimed angrily.

"Yes; I am always ready to pursue knowledge, even when the coy nymph is only to be courted under difficulties."

"I'm mistress in my own house; and, as I did not ask you for your society, perhaps you will hook it as soon as you conveniently can."

"You must bring an action of ejectment against me."

"Oh, no; I always take the law into my own hands."

"The law ought to be much indebted to you for your trouble."

"That's more than you will be if I begin with you."

"Manual violence is to be deprecated," he re-

plied ; " and, as I have an appointment in the lobby of the House of Commons at half-past four, I think I will reluctantly tear myself away, which I shall do with less unwillingness, as I leave you in such excellent hands as those of my friend Watkins."

He took up his hat, and, with a bow to Fanny and a nod to Watkins, carelessly walked out of the room.

"I can't say I like that fellow," exclaimed Fanny. "I am glad he is gone."

"I never yet knew any body who did like him."

"He thinks himself clever; but men are great beasts who go on chaffing women as he does. They don't admire them for it, they only put them down as cads."

"I don't think you have seen the last of him," remarked Watkins.

"Come to the window and see which way he goes," said Fanny.

The window was open, and she looked into the street. Wormald was on the pavement, and he caught sight of Fanny ; "Ah !" he cried, kissing his hand to her, "this is kind of you ; but it is no more than I expected from a woman of your amiable disposition. Ta, ta ! I shall come and see you again soon. You know where to write to me. By, by, my child ; take care of yourself. Ah ! there is that slyboots, Watkins. I see him. Don't lead him astray or corrupt his morals. It would be a pity ; at present he is an ornament to his regiment. Make him be a good boy."

A Hansom cab came by, and Wormald held up

his stick, shouting "Hansom!" at the top of his voice. As he drove off, he smiled, and exclaimed, "Be good children."

"Oh, the beast!" cried Fanny Carruthers, beside herself with rage.

Watkins smiled.

"If he comes here again, I'll kill him, I will, if I get imprisoned for life for it. I could murder that man, I hate him so. Fancy his chaffing me in the street, and you too! If you were half a fellow, you would go after him, and pitch into him."

"It's too much trouble this hot weather, or else I would," replied Watkins.

"Oh, how I wish I had him here!"

"It's no good being put out about it; he is an ungodly shyster. Have something to drink, and be jolly."

"Get some champagne out of the cupboard, then, and ring for some ice," replied Fanny, calming down a little.

She went into her bedroom to wash her hands, and rang for Rose. As Rose made her appearance, Fanny was powdering her face, which was rather hot.

"Such a nice gentleman, Miss Fanny!" exclaimed Rose rapturously. "Who is he? He gave me a sovereign!"

"Did he? It'll be the last, then; for if I catch him here again, I'll murder him," replied Fanny, who told Rose the cause of her rage.

Some days passed, and she saw nothing more of Wormald.

CHAPTER IX.

STOFFLES YIELDS TO THE TEMPTER.

WHILST the daughter was pursuing her giddy and frivolous career with her accustomed thoughtlessness, the father was very differently occupied. He awaited the cessation of the festivities of the ducal gathering at Goodwood with impatience, for until they were over and finished he would see little or nothing of Gentleman Barton. He was now Dick Stoffles' only hope. His daughter, who had hitherto been the prop and the stay of his declining years, had most unfilially thrown him over, and he was in so desperate a position that he clung to Barton as his last chance. If he were unable to pay his debts, he would be driven with contumely from the Ruins, and his only means of subsistence would be taken from him. To be posted as a defaulter would be equivalent to being sent to the workhouse, and he knew it so well that he preferred any thing rather than a contingency so hateful to him.

At last the Cup was run for, and Stoffles imagined that Barton would be at liberty. He went to a favourite haunt of his in the Haymarket—that paradise of betting men—and was instantly recognised in a “pub” by a knot of acquaintances standing round the bar. They pressed him to have something to drink, and he, nothing loth, consented.

“Gentleman Barton’s been asking after you,” exclaimed a young man showily dressed, and wearing a profusion of jewelry.

"Oh! Where is he?"

"Said he'd be back in an hour."

"How long is that ago?"

"Not above thirty minutes."

"Thank you," replied Stoffles, grateful for the information. "What will you have?"

"What will it run to?" said the young man.

"Any thing you like."

"I'll toss you for a bottle of Moselle, then."

"Not a bit of it; I asked you to drink, and I'm not going to let you pay."

Stoffles called for the wine, and it was speedily consumed. He was half way through his second bottle when Gentleman Barton entered.

He seemed in high spirits, and patting Stoffles on the back, exclaimed, "That's **your** sort, my boy. I'm out for a spree to-night. **Let's** go and hear a song somewhere."

"You go to the Ranter-very," said a friend of Barton's. "That's the place, sir; they go it like steam there. It's all a bit of barney. And the gals! there are some gals there! Oh, my! oh! Naughty Jemima Brown's a fool to them!"

"How are you, Charley?" replied Barton.

"Oh, nicely, thank you. How's yourself?"

"As lively as can be expected under a hot sun."

"Been to Goodwood?"

"Rayther."

"Pull any thing off?"

"A small kettle. Just enough to keep the horse and chaise a-going, and the shutters from being put up."

"That's right."

"You've been doing the leviathan business, I suppose?"

"Me! I'm only a minnow."

"Oh," shouted Charley, "that's a good un. You can do it. Favour us with an *ongcore*!"

"You're too cheeky for me, Charley," replied Gentleman Barton, shaking his head.

"If I was a swell and had made a pot, I should go to the Uproar," said Charley.

Barton took Dick Stoffles' arm and led the way out of the tavern; when they were in the street, he said, "I couldn't talk to you there comfortably, there are too many fellows about. Walk down this way with me."

"Are you going to hear a song?"

"Not I; that was only meant for a stall. If you like to turn into the Alhambra for half an hour or so, I don't mind."

"As you please."

"All right; we'll stroll down that way, and talk as we go along. Have you a cigar?"

"No," replied Stoffles.

"Try one of mine; they are the best in London, without exception."

Stoffles took one, lighted it, and was ready for business.

"Now, look here," exclaimed Barton. "You have heard of Stoke?"

"Yes."

"It is there that they manufacture the Bank paper."

"So you told me."

"I want some of that paper."

"What for?"

"Never mind why. That is no business of yours; all you have to do, is to go down to Stoke and work it as you like. I don't care so long as you get me the paper."

"How much do you want?"

"Say a ream or two; but you must get it in small quantities, and let me have it by degrees."

"I understand."

"Don't you get sending it to me, or any thing of that sort. Bring it up yourself, and leave it at some crib where we go—if you like, at the house we have just left."

"I see what you want," said Stoffles; "but it is a hazardous enterprise."

"That be d—. Will you do it, or will you not? Come, decide, and look slippery."

"I will."

And as he spoke he felt the wind hissing by him and rushing into his ears, as if it were made up of a quantity of flying sibilant serpents.

"That's right; nothing like being a man when you can't help yourself. You know what you have to do?"

"I know."

"Well, tell me."

"Go to Stoke and obtain a pattern of the Bank-note paper, and leave it for you at some crib of ours."

"That'll do. Now let us talk about your affairs. You want some uns?"

"Badly."

"How much will square you?"

"It'll take a devil of a lot."

"Put it in a lump."

Dick Stoffles began to calculate.

"State the figures, and never mind the fractions."

He had asked his daughter for a hundred pounds; but as he was going to run a risk, he replied, "Five hundred."

"I'll give you two hundred, my lad," exclaimed Barton; "and if you do your work well, I'll make your fortune; but I mustn't put you on the stilts too soon."

Stoffles said nothing.

"Will you take it?"

"I will."

That was the second affirmative reply he had made that night.

"Done! Give us your fist on it."

"Stand under this lamp-post while I count out the flimsy. Now, have you got it all right?"

"Yes, all right."

"Two hundred quid?"

"Two hundred quid," replied Stoffles.

"I shall expect to hear of you, Dick Stoffles, in less than a fortnight."

"So you shall."

"You won't fail me?"

"No."

"You'll keep to your word?"

"I will!"

This was the third affirmative.

"If you don't, Dick Stoffles," cried Gentleman Barton, clenching his fist and holding it up in his face, "I'll have every drop of blood your skin contains. I'll hunt you down, Dick Stoffles, if you sell me, as if you were so much carrion. If you try the selling caper on with me, I'll spoil your little game, and play small h— with you; I will, by G—."

The next moment Stoffles was by himself, and a cold "Good by" from Gentleman Barton was ringing in his ears. He had sold himself, and he bore the price of his future dishonesty in his pocket.

He slouched his hat and walked quickly along the street, as if he were afraid some one might recognise him as the thief in intention, and soon to be the thief in fact and reality.

CHAPTER X.

GENTLEMAN BARTON IS PUZZLED.

It so happened that Gentleman Barton's footsteps led him towards a region around which hovered a canine savour. It was the haunt of dog-fanciers and those who take an interest in the friend of man. Barton knew a good dog when he saw one, and he remembered to have heard that on that particular evening there was to be a show of toy-terriers—those little beauties, whose value is equal to that of a good, sound, fast-trotting cob—that is, if they are bred in and in, until they are so small they will go into a pewter pot, and shake and shiver as if they were in the arctic regions.

When he entered the public-house he found a large number of people assembled, each one of whom had a dog in the pocket of his coat, under his arm, or in a basket. The son of the proprietor of the tavern—which ought to have been called the “Dogs’ Home,” or the “Kennel,” but wasn’t—shook Barton heartily by the hand, and said, “I wanted to see you.”

“Any thing I can do for you?”

“Yes. There’s a lady who wants a tyke.”

“Toy?”

“Thorough-bred toy; and don’t mind the price. I want to kid her into having a couple.”

“Well, Jimmy, what’s to prevent you?”

“Just this—I haven’t got time. The guv’nor’s laid up with a touch of gout, and I can’t get away. That’s the truth, and no flies. There’s no blarney about me, Barton.”

“I suppose you want me to work the oracle for you?”

“That’s it.”

“What do you want for the two?”

“Sixty quid. I could not take a farthing less.”

“It’s a long price,” said Barton thoughtfully.

“It is so; but you look at the article. If they ain’t worth the money, I’ll never breed another dog in my life.”

“Where are they?”

“Round at the back, in a hutch. Come and have a squint at them. You can tell with half an eye what they are.”

Barton followed Jimmy into a back-yard, and in a dry shed the two animals were discovered. Barton took one of them up, and carefully examined it with a critical eye.

The nose was long; the head round, like a bullet; the legs short; the toes pencilled; the tan perfect; the coat glossy and spare; the tail long and thin, like that of a rat.

"Isn't he a beauty?" exclaimed Jimmy rapturously.

"Perfect!"

Putting that one down, he took up the other.

"Halloa!" he cried.

"What's amiss?" asked Jimmy.

"Won't do, my boy."

"What won't do?"

"You don't get over me with your cobbling tricks."

"Cobbling tricks!"

"Yes. He's foul-marked."

"That be blowed. Show us his foul mark."

"Get a sponge and some hot water, and rub the ochre off, and I'll show it you fast enough. I wasn't born yesterday, Jimmy, my man, nor yet the day before, and you don't come the old soldier over me. Besides—"

He began to smell the dog's coat.

"What have you found now?"

"You've been brimstoning him?"

"Oh! You'd swear a blister on a flat-iron, you would," replied Jimmy in a tone of deep disgust.

"He's had the mange, Jimmy; and he's as full

of brimstone as he can hold. It's a toss up whether he lives or not."

"Oh, d— such fellows as you! You know too much for me. Put the tyke down and come to the bar and have a glass."

Barton followed Jimmy to the bar, and after drinking a glass of bitter ale, said: "I'll work that little job for you, Jimmy."

"You will?"

"Yes. Where's the dogs going?"

"To Clapham."

"Give us the address, and I'll take them up early to-morrow morning."

"Here's the address. Sixty quid's the figure. The guv'nor don't think I can get above five-and-twenty. We'll stick to the other, Barton, and blew it at Egham, or somewhere, if you're game."

"I'm your man," replied Gentleman Barton, folding up the address and putting it in his pocket.

The next morning he was up early, and calling at the dog-fancier's, put the toy-terriers in the capacious pockets of his shooting-coat, and jumping into a Hansom cab, drove to Clapham. He was not particularly fond of "over the water." He had once passed a few months of his valuable career within the precincts of the Queen's Bench, where he was lodged at the suit of a Trinity-Square bill-discounting attorney, who, not being able to obtain his interest—a mild 120 per cent—although the principal was repaid, wreaked his paltry vengeance on the carcass of his debtor. That was in the palmy days of the Bench, when Hudson was governor. Some of the

best men in London sojourned compulsorily within its precincts.

He associated Clapham with clear-starching, conventicles, schools, maiden annts, City magnates, and chocolate-coloured 'buses. He alighted from his cab at the Plough, on Clapham Common, as he did not like to drive up to the door. The cabman directed him to the place he was in search of, and skirting the Common, he passed by the church, entered the Old Town, and found himself in a network of small streets, the houses in which looked like toy-houses, so spick and span new were they. The bricks were white and clean, as if the housemaid had scrubbed them all over when she did her steps in the morning. Barton had some difficulty with the old lady who wished to purchase the dogs; but after a little haggling he sold one dog for twenty-five pounds, and the other for twenty: with which bargain he was very well satisfied. When he left the house, the sun was just beginning to show its power; but it was not as yet unpleasantly hot, so he resolved to walk a short distance, work his way into the main road, and pick up the first cab he saw.

As he walked slowly along on that bright summer morning, through the still, quiet, old-fashioned streets of Clapham Old Town, melancholy thoughts stole over him. He tried in vain to drive them off. They would not be driven. His soul was dark, in spite of all his efforts to the contrary. After travelling from one sombre subject to another, his mental vision fixed itself upon Milly. Gentleman Barton had perplexed himself a great deal during the last

fortnight or ten days in a vain attempt to find out what had become of Milly. He knew that she was not destitute or in want, because she was well supplied with money and laden with jewelry when she left the house. She was certainly a wasp, and her sting lay in her tongue; but the more he considered the matter, the more sorry he was for what he had done in a moment of irritation. He had always laid down for himself a fundamental maxim and an immutable rule, that no provocation can justify a blow when a woman is the recipient of the assault; yet he had forgotten all this in his passion: and now he supposed that the woman he had once loved had buried herself in some solitude, so as to hide her bruised face and her battered features. She had loved him too. That he had no doubt of; and at one time it flattered his vanity to be loved by her; for she was in a good position in her own *petite* and insignificant world, and, as she told him during their quarrel, might have made a much better and more profitable alliance than the one she contracted with him. He was annoyed to think that he had driven her away from him. He felt lonely without her. His love for her came back again with renewed force, and its flame burnt with redoubled ardour. He was sufficiently well acquainted with her ardent and passionate nature to know that he had, by his hasty brutality, extinguished her love for him, and annihilated it for ever. It would never return. It was now nothing more than a dream of the past—the phantom-peopled past; and he placed it with other ghastly skeletons in his shrouding mind.

A large, commanding, corner public-house caught his attention, and feeling a cup too low, he turned in, as he very often did, to get something to inspire him with that species of courage usually attributed to the Dutch, who, if they are universally admitted to be fat, have credit generally given them for the possession of valour. There are Rip van Winkles surrounded by clouds of smoke, but they are those of tobacco, and not of gunpowder.

He had a pint-bottle of Moët's pink champagne, for which he paid seven and sixpence, as he insisted upon having the best in the place. This he did with his usual extravagance. He had no idea of saving money, nor did he know its value any more than a schoolboy. He had no difficulty in spending money. His only trouble was to get it fast enough. Lighting a cigar, he stood at the door of the tavern in contemplative mood, when he cast his eyes up the street, and was struck with astonishment at seeing a woman, with an elegant figure, descend some steps with a pail of water in one hand and a scrubbing-brush in the other. She was dressed in a cotton gown pinned up in front, disclosing two exquisitely proportioned feet, small and lady-like. She wore no crinoline. Her sleeves were turned up to the elbow, and Barton remarked that her skin was dazzlingly white. He could not see her face, as her back was turned towards him. Falling down upon her knees, the woman began to scrub the steps with some energy; but after a short time she paused and breathed heavily, as if she was not strong and the exertion was too much for her. Gentleman Bar-

ton's curiosity was piqued. He was a Don Juan amongst women, and would as soon make love to a rustic "Phillis" as to a lady of the court. Having paid his bill at the public-house, he had nothing to detain him there ; so he sauntered down the street. The woman did not look up or pay the slightest attention to him. She continued her scrubbing, with her face bent down to within a few inches of the stone steps, as if she were ashamed of her occupation, and did not wish her countenance to be seen while she was engaged in so menial an occupation.

It was incumbent on Gentleman Barton to speak first. He thought that if the girl's face was as pretty as her figure led him to expect, he had lighted upon an agreeable adventure.

"Good morning, my dear," he exclaimed.

The girl moved nervously on one side as the tones of his voice vibrated in her ears, but she made no answer.

"Clapham's a lively place in the morning," he continued.

Still no answer.

"Don't they allow you to use your tongue, my dear, except on particular occasions ?"

The brush dropped from her hand, and she trembled all over like an aspen.

"Rather a strict family, perhaps ? Master in the parson line, my dear, eh ? Passes his life in devil-dodging, doesn't he ? Go to bed at nine, and have prayers and Dutch-cheese at half-past eight, with a sermon founded on the Litany, which espe-

cially warns us against for—well, we'll draw it mild, and say, deadly sin !”

The girl uttered a low cry, and fell forward on her face.

Gentleman Barton exclaimed: “What’s the row now? Girl subject to fits. Devilish awkward. Let’s have a look at her.”

He lifted her up, and took one hasty, hurried glance at her face.

“My God !” he cried in a wild, startled manner, standing with his back against the railings, with the girl in his arms.

It was Milly.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FORCE OF DESTINY.

AT this critical juncture, which was a “momentous crisis in her miserable life,” Milly was happily unconscious. She was not destined to remain so long ; for Mrs. Halifax had, from one of the windows of her house, been a witness of what had, within the last five minutes, occurred outside. She had in the first instance been startled at the apparition of a fast-looking man in bold and open communication with her servant. She had secondly been scandalised at the impudent persistence of the man ; and thirdly, all the blood in her virtuous veins ran riot at the idea of his holding her in his arms, and looking fondly at her, like a vagrant satyr.

Without thinking of the probable consequences

of her rash act, she rushed from the room, pushed open the street-door, and descended the steps at a hand-gallop. So great was her excitement, that she unwittingly pushed up against Gentleman Barton, threatening that individual's equilibrium.

"Halloa ! old lady ; mind where you're coming to," said Barton.

"Who are you, sir ?" exclaimed Mrs. Halifax in an angry voice.

"Oh, I'm somebody when I'm at home, but no one in particular when I'm out."

A rude pot-boy passing by brought himself to a standstill, unstrung a string of cans which he carried over his shoulder, and, with a broad grin upon his slightly greasy countenance, looked on with that innate appreciation of a row peculiar to the London *gamin*.

"How dare you interfere with my servant, sir !" resumed Mrs. Halifax in a still shriller treble.

"Now, then, missus," exclaimed the pot-boy, "that's your sort. Go it, only don't fluster yourself, because you don't know what the old man might say when he comes home."

"Your servant, is she ?" replied Barton.

"Yes ; she is."

"Since when has she been your servant ?"

"This fortnight and more."

Barton's face flushed with anger. The idea of Milly being any one's servant was excruciating to him. It nearly drove him mad.

"Your servant ?" he repeated ; "why, she's a d— sight too good for *you* to clean *her* shoes."

"You know her, then, I presume, you dreadful man?"

"Know her? I should think I did."

"In what way?"

"In what way do you think?"

"I ask you for information."

"In a variety of ways."

"O you bad man!" exclaimed Mrs. Halifax. "The idea of my being insulted like this! It's all through having such women in the house."

"Such women! Why, she's as good as you," replied Gentleman Barton indignantly.

"I suppose you're the man who beat her poor face so horribly?" said Mrs. Halifax, imprudently entering into a discussion with the enemy.

"You mind your own business."

An errand-boy now joined the pot-boy, and wanted, with the inquisitiveness of his race, to know all about the disturbance.

"The bloke what's got the girl's been a-beating of her, and the t'other female's her mother, I expect, and don't like it."

"Mother of who?" asked the errand-boy, whose ideas of things in general were rather hazy.

"Mother of her as 'as been beat."

"Oh, that's it. She'll give him in charge if she sees a bobby, won't she?"

The pot-boy replied that, not being in the lady's confidence, he was unable to reply with any reasonable degree of accuracy.

Milly opened her eyes, and stared wildly about her. She recognised Barton first, and then Mrs. Halifax.

"Come inside, my child," said the latter. "Flee from temptation."

"Can you stand upright now, Milly?" asked Barton.

"Not very well," was the faint reply. "Let me sit down on the step; my head seems so dizzy, and swims round."

Gentleman Barton gently placed her on the step, and, keeping one arm round her waist, took half a crown from his pocket with the other, and gave it to the pot-boy, saying :

"Go and get some brandy. Make haste !"

The boy was off like a shot, and presently returned with the spirit.

Barton took it from him, and poured some down Milly's throat, which appeared to do her much good. Mrs. Halifax stood still, with an expression of grave displeasure upon her face.

Milly rose to her feet, and seemed strong enough to walk now. Barton put her arm through his, and tried to lead her away. This proceeding on his part at once raised Mrs. Halifax's fear to a high pitch.

"Where are you going to take her, you bad, bad man?" she cried.

The pot-boy and his friend began to sing:

"Get away black gal;

Don't you come a-nigh me!"

with grotesque capers and extraordinary facial contortions.

"You find out, and then you'll know," replied Barton.

"But you shall not take her away."

"Who's to prevent me?"

"I will."

"You?"

"The police will assist me."

"You'll have to find them first."

"I'll have you locked up."

"Thank you. I've got plenty of bails within a mile."

"Milly," cried Mrs. Halifax.

Milly looked up.

"Listen to me, my dear child. Don't go with him; for mercy's sake, don't go with him. He's only the devil in disguise."

The boys changed their melody to "Down in the Dark Arches by the Adelphee," laying great stress upon the edifying chorus of—

"Oh, yes, she did,

So she did,

Down in the dark arches of the Adelphee."

"Come round the corner, Milly, and have a drain," said Barton; "we can talk matters over on the quiet."

"Don't listen to him," shrieked Mrs. Halifax.

Milly appeared perplexed; she hardly knew what to do.

"You can go back again to Mrs. Smellfungus as soon as you like; only, for the sake of old times, Milly, come and have just three words."

"Very well," replied Milly in the soft voice which seemed to have become habitual to her.

"Milly!" said Mrs. Halifax.

"Don't talk so loud; you might frighten her," said Barton, who hated Mrs. Halifax because Milly had waited upon her and been her servant.

"As your mistress, I command you to come into the house."

"Oh, yes!" replied Barton; "she's sure to do it now."

"I shall dismiss you if you refuse."

"That won't break her heart."

"You're a wretch; but you will have your reward hereafter."

"I hope so, I'm sure; times are hard enough now."

"She will be lost."

"In that case, we can advertise her."

"Heaven help us!" said Mrs. Halifax, with a piteous look; "there's an immortal soul going to perdition."

"Is it insured? because it mightn't get there safe. Any how, you'd better pay the carriage," replied Gentleman Barton.

He gave Milly some more brandy, which strengthened her considerably.

"Better give her water," observed Mrs. Halifax.

"Is there any thing about drinking water in the Bible?" asked Barton.

"Of course there is."

"Where?"

"I can't tell you offhand; but if you'll come to my Bible-class, I'll—"

"Shall I tell you where the solitary instance occurs?"

"I don't suppose a man like you knows much about sacred subjects."

"Wait a bit, and you'll see."

"I shall be happy to be enlightened."

"There was a fellow called Dives, who wanted some water to moisten his tongue; but he was in hell—where he deserved to be," replied Barton, with a coarse laugh.

"That is where you will go, you wicked, bad man—you scoffer—you infidel—you unbeliever—you ridiculer of sacred things," said Mrs. Halifax, much shocked.

"I sha'n't care so long as I don't meet you there," exclaimed Barton; "I couldn't stand that."

Turning to Milly, he added:

"Come along, Milly."

She pressed his arm and walked away with him, while the boys struck up another air, and sang:

"I used to take her every where,
To all the sights in town;
But now she's left me in despair,
Naughty Jemima Brown!"

supplementing the verse with a wonderful chorus:

"Naughty Geemymer Brow-ow-own!
Naughty Gee-my-mer Brown!"

Mrs. Halifax retired into her own dominions, and slammed the door spitefully after her. The two boys walked after Barton and Milly, indulging in sarcastic remarks at the former's expense, and

lamenting that the police did not come upon the angry scene in time to take somebody into custody.

Gentleman Barton led Milly into the public-house in which he had taken refuge just before he met her, and called for some more champagne, which he ordered to be taken into a private room. The barman opened his eyes, and wondered at a woman so shabbily dressed as Milly being thought worthy of an expensive wine; but, with the discreteness of a prudent man, he held his peace.

When Barton got Milly up-stairs, she threw herself on the sofa, and exclaimed :

“ O Jack, I *have* suffered so.”

He knew it ; he did not want her to tell him about her misery. It was legibly written on her poor pale face. How thin and ill she looked ! There were yet a few yellow marks, showing where he had struck her ; but it was not that which made her look the shadow of her former self. She was attenuated, and her skin was shrunken and pinched and drawn in. The work of a fortnight should have been the work of twenty years.

Gentleman Barton's first exclamation after the wine arrived and the door had shut after the waiter was :

“ By G—, Milly, you look like a corpse !”

She sighed a reply, and the tears trickled from her eyes.

He poured out some wine, and said :

“ Here, drink some of this ; it will do you good.”

“ I would rather not drink it,” she replied.

"Not drink it? Oh, nonsense! you used to be so fond of it, and, I can tell you, it is not half bad."

"A great change has taken place in me, Jack. I shall be stronger in a minute or two, and then I will tell you all about it."

"Drink this," he replied, "there's a pet. You will feel as jolly again."

He urged her until she did drink it; and when she set down the glass, a slight flush showed on her pallid face, indicating that the abstemious life she had lately led had not agreed with her.

"Have you had no liquor since you hooked it off that day?" Gentleman Barton said, with much surprise.

"Not a drop."

"Why, it's enough to kill you—any doctor would tell you that. You should never leave a thing off suddenly; it does you more harm than good."

"I wish to God, Jack, I hadn't met you to-day. It seems like a curse that you should have dropped on me as you did. I thought that out here none of my old pals would have spotted me," said Milly, with a sigh.

It was strange that when in his presence she could not divest herself of her old slangy way of speaking. With Mrs. Halifax her English was as pure as it could be. But she was deeply agitated, and could not spare the time or take the trouble to be precise.

"Don't say that, Milly," replied Barton, with

much feeling. "I hope our meeting may turn out a winning horse for you."

"Not it, Jack ; the time's past now."

"Past ! What do you mean ?"

"I shouldn't have lived to be a trouble or a burden to any body long ; and that's why I'm so cut up at meeting you. Another week or two would have done for me, Jack. I felt I was dying by inches ; and I was glad of it. Whenever my heart beat more violently than usual, and made me gasp for breath, I used to bless the palpitation, because I knew it was another nail in my coffin."

"What's the meaning of all this, Milly ?" cried Barton. "I should think you'd gone silly, if I didn't know you so well."

"Do you want to be told ?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, then, it's this,—I'm a Christian."

"I'm not in the humour for chaffing, Milly," Barton said, for he did not think her in earnest.

"No more am I."

"Do you really mean what you say ?"

"I do, indeed," she replied solemnly. "Look here ; I'll tell you all about it. Give me some more wine ; as I've had some, I may as well have some more."

Gentleman Barton was pleased to see that the champagne was taking effect upon her, and he filled her glass up to the brim, taking care to leave a little froth as possible.

"When I left you," resumed Milly, "I hardly cared where I went. I wandered about the streets,

and at last came to a place in the Strand they call Exeter Hall. There was a great crowd, and I got drawn into the building somehow or other ; and when I was once there, I couldn't get out again. There was a lot of singing, and after that some preaching."

"That licked you, I suppose?"

"It converted me. The parson, Mr. Halifax, spoke to me, and wanted to send me to a reformatory ; but as I did not like the idea, he took me into his service, where I have been ever since. I never thought I should live long. Your ill-treatment broke my heart. It will soon be over, Jack. It only makes me feel inclined to cry when I see you. Will you let me go back now?"

"Not just yet, Milly."

He mused over what she had just told him. His reverie was interrupted by Milly, who exclaimed : "Don't be dull, old fellow!"

He started up, and perceived, from her fervid cheeks and her staring eyes, that the wine was taking effect upon her. This was what he desired ; he poured out some more, and handed it to her. She drank it with avidity. It completed the task the brandy had commenced. Barton's wish was to get Milly away from the Halifaxes. He could see that they had worked upon her mind until she thought herself desperately wicked, and wished to do all she could to expiate her sin. Yet she was not happy, because she had distinctly stated that she lived in expectation of dying soon, and that it was her only consolation.

"I say, Milly, you don't want to go back to your place just yet, do you?" he exclaimed.

She looked at him with her lustrous eyes, and shook back her thick and glossy jet-black hair, and replied :

"I'm not in a hurry for an hour or two."

"Let us go for a spree somewhere."

"I can't go in these things."

"Where are your others?"

"Mrs. Halifax has them."

"Perhaps she won't give them to you?"

He said this because his knowledge of her character told him that nothing was more calculated to exasperate her in her then state of mind.

"Won't she?" cried Milly. "I should be sorry for her if she refused."

"What would you do?"

"I'd pull the house down. I'd limb her."

"Have some more wine?"

"I think I will ; just a little drop. It's rather good."

"Will you go after your things now?"

"All right."

"Shall I go with you?"

"Only as far as the door."

"Come along, then ; we'll go to Richmond and dine, eh?"

"Yes ; the Star and Garter," replied Milly, getting up and following Barton down-stairs.

It did not take them long to reach Mrs. Halifax's house. The parson's wife ran to the door with alacrity when she saw who her visitors were, because

she thought Milly had made up her mind to come back. She had many reasons for not wishing to part with Milly. The first was, she had found her an excellent pupil,—good, dutiful, and obedient. Secondly, she was a capital servant; did her work well and conscientiously, and encouraged no followers,—all recommendations in the eyes of a mistress.

“You have done right in returning,” she exclaimed. “The butcher has just brought the meat. Go down-stairs, put it in water, and set it on the fire to boil. It will take two hours. Then you can come to me, and I will show you how to strengthen yourself against further temptation.”

Barton wanted to follow Milly into the hall; but Mrs. Halifax said:

“I certainly could not think of admitting you, after the way in which you have behaved. I must request you to go away.”

“I want my things, Mrs. Halifax,” exclaimed Milly.

“Want them, child! What for?”

“Never mind what for. Give them to me.”

“I really—that is—” stammered Mrs. Halifax, “I don’t know whether I shall be justified in doing so until Mr. Halifax’s return. He will be able to decide.”

“You can’t keep them. I demand them,” said Milly; “and if you don’t give them to me, I’ll smash your place up.”

Mrs. Halifax held up her hands in horror. The cloven hoof was peeping out beneath the shoe. She

knew that she had no right to detain the girl's property ; so she made a virtue of necessity, and produced every thing she had agreed to take care of. Milly ran up-stairs with her bundle of clothes, a fierce joy burning in her eyes. Barton stood on the doorstep, and Mrs. Halifax sat down on a chair, and awaited the sequel. Milly was an incredibly short space of time dressing herself. She had put all her jewelry on. As she passed Mrs. Halifax, she took a diamond ring from her finger, and offered it to her as a parting gift. It was, however, respectfully but firmly declined.

"No, my child, thank you ; I may not take the wages of sin." And with that she rose and entered her drawing-room, where she fell on her knees and made supplication for Milly, though she knew it not.

"Now you look something like," exclaimed Gentleman Barton.

"Have you got any tin?" she said. "If not, I have ; take my purse."

"I happen to be flush."

He had hardly finished speaking before a Hansom drove up to the public-house at the corner of the street, set some one down, and was going on again, when Barton hailed it. He handed Milly in, and said :

"Where shall we go?"

"How long does it take to get to Richmond?"

"About an hour."

"And Greenwich?"

"The same."

"And Brighton?"

"I don't think there's much difference."

"Go to Brighton, then."

Gentleman Barton made no objection, and told the cabman to drive to the London Bridge Station. An express train was on the point of starting. They purchased their tickets, and were soon on their way to the coast.

"The accidents and changes of life are certainly very remarkable," thought Barton. "Here was I this morning going quietly along the streets of Clapham to sell a couple of dogs, and, lo and behold, I tumble upon Milly in the most unpremeditated manner in the world. It is the most extraordinary case I ever met with. She was, an hour ago, as dirty as Cinderella in a flagrant state of untidiness; and now she is as smart as Goody Two-Shoes with her new *brodequins*. Well may designers draw a ship tossed about on a stormy ocean, and motto it, 'Such is life.'"

He endeavoured, by unremitting kindness, to regain Milly's affection; but he could see that she was in a state of unwonted excitement. Her imagination was inflamed by drink; and he feared that the religious mania she had indulged in so fiercely had disordered her mind, if it had not diseased her brain. It suggested the American revivals, in which people are suddenly converted, and immediately perform acts which a Hindoo fakir would consider harsh and unpleasant, although a fakir is not a man to stick at trifles.

CHAPTER XII.

“THE SAD SEA WAVES.”

To Milly the waves were always sad. When they were in a state of stormy agitation, there was, to her fancy, something melancholy in their grandeur. They rivalled mountains in their size sometimes, and levelled the proudest structures of man, while they lowered his ambitious pride.

When she reached the sea-side, the waves were very calm and placid, so much so that the ocean resembled a huge sheet of glass; hardly a ripple disturbed the smoothness of its surface. Innumerable pleasure-boats might have been discovered, dotting the sea here and there; but sailing vessels lay safely at their moorings, there being no wind to propel them. There were not many people in the town of Brighton that August. It was too hot and too quiet for second-rate people, who knew nobody there and wanted to enjoy themselves. So *they* went to Ramsgate, and other congenial places. People who were in a good position, and could afford it, had gone abroad; so that lodgings were cheap, and the place empty. Gentleman Barton frequently went to Brighton to recruit his health; and he was in the habit of putting up at a quiet hotel opposite the sea, where he knew he should be comfortable and undisturbed. He ordered dinner in an hour and a half, and went with Milly for a

walk. She felt a little faint ; but a basin of soup at a confectioner's restored her.

"Glad to get away from that place, eh, Milly?" exclaimed Gentleman Barton, as they sauntered arm-in-arm along the Parade.

"Oh, so glad, dear!" she replied, with an affectionate glance, hanging heavily on his arm, and speaking in a fond tone.

She seemed to love him again, and to have forgotten his ill-treatment of a fortnight ago, her sufferings consequent upon it, and her conversion.

"Would you like a lace shawl, dearest?" he asked.

"It would be expensive."

"Never mind. I've put the pot on rather heavily lately, and pulled it off all right ; so twenty pounds or so is nothing to me just now."

"If it would please you to buy it for me."

"It would, very much."

He wanted to make her a peace-offering. He had a lingering suspicion that Milly had not altogether forgiven him. There was something odd in her manner which he did not quite understand. She was strangely abstracted at times ; and when he spoke she did not appear to comprehend him, or catch his meaning all at once. She would look up at him and smile in a vacant, girlish way, like Ophelia in the play of *Hamlet* when she makes herself a wreath of flowers, and sits by the side of the bank. If Barton had been as good a judge of female human nature as he was of horseflesh, this would have made him afraid ; but he put down her

singular demeanour to the events of the last fortnight, and thought it would wear off in a day or two. They went into a shop, and bought a very handsome shawl of fine lace, for which Barton paid over the counter twenty-five pounds. She admired it in a childish way, threw it carelessly over her shoulders, and appeared to forget all about it. She wanted to go and "see the waves," she said.

"How do you like your shawl, Mousey?" (this was a pet name), said Barton, as they entered the street once more.

"I want to see the waves," she replied.

He crossed the road in order to oblige her, and they stood on the path looking over the beach, and leaning against the railings.

"Are the waves deep?" asked Milly.

"In some places, very deep," he replied wonderingly. "What a funny question, Mouse!"

"Very deep," she repeated absently.

"Let's get a fly, Milly; one of those with a hood. The sun's enough to broil one."

"A fly!"

"Yes. What are you thinking of? Don't you feel well?"

He spoke loudly, and she seemed to remark the tone of his voice, which was a menacing one, more than his words; for she exclaimed:

"Don't bully me. *Do* be kind to me. I can't bear being bullied now."

"I didn't mean to bully you, dearest."

"I can't really bear it; I feel it here."

She touched her forehead as she spoke.

"Why not say in your heart, Milly?"

"I haven't got a heart," she said in a despairing tone.

"No heart!"

"No; it's broken now."

"We'll soon mend it," replied Gentleman Barton jocularly. "I suppose you have the pieces?"

The gaiety with which he spoke was forced, and it jarred painfully against his own nerves without reassuring her.

He put her in a fly, and they drove up and down the Parade in a solemn, stately manner, like a Lord Mayor's show on the ninth of November.

The truth of Milly's abstraction was, that her mind was going, although Barton knew it not. The utmost care should have been taken of her. She should, above all things, have been restrained from touching spirituous or fermented liquors; and here he was stimulating her to the top of her bent. It was nothing more nor less than sheer madness.

"I always thought we should patch it up again, Milly," observed Barton, by way of beginning a conversation — rather a difficult affair to sustain with Milly in her present state of mind.

"Did you?"

"Yes; what was your opinion about it?"

"I never had one; I only wanted to die."

"Die!"

"Oh, yes; I should like to die now."

"What do you want to die for?"

"I should be out of my misery then."

"What misery?"

"Do I look happy?" she cried, raising her veil, and exhibiting her pallid features to him.

"It's about time, Milly, to forget all about our row. You needn't keep it up for ever. We're square enough again now."

"You mean when you hit me and beat me so cruelly?"

"I wish you'd shut up. Can't you stash it? Your words are always like the thing the shoemaker threw at his wife—the last."

"It wasn't your fault, Jack."

"Why not drop it, then?"

"You weren't born a gentleman, you know."

"Hang your gentlemen."

"You can't be a gentleman; nothing will ever make you one."

"I don't mean to try."

"You couldn't if you did."

"If you are so infernally fond of a lot of swindling Queen's Bench fellows, and a flash lot about town, why don't you go and stick up to some of them?"

"Ah! you will be sorry some day, Jack," replied Milly thoughtfully,—“sorry when I'm dead and gone; sorry when they put me in the coffin and nail the lid down; sorry when the hearse takes me to the cemetery,—you won't let the parish bury me, Jack, will you?—sorry when they lower me into the grave with the ropes; and still sorrier, Jack, if they don't read the rites over me.”

"What rites?" he ejaculated, much agitated.

"Oh, I don't know exactly. In some pecu-

liar cases they don't always read the Burial Service."

"Don't be a fool, Milly. You have just had enough lush to make you disagreeable. Come and have some more, and then you will be jolly."

They drove back to the hotel, and had some brandy-and-bitters before dinner.

When dessert was on the table, Gentleman Barton placed a couple of chairs in the balcony; and taking a dish of peaches with him, sat out there peeling the fruit for Milly, who ate it with a languid pleasure. The sun was just going down, and its golden effulgence flushed the sea with a radiant splendour towards the west. Milly watched the sea intently. It was calmer than ever.

"Isn't it odd, Jack," she exclaimed, "there are no waves now?"

"It's a calm."

"Fancy the sea having no waves!" she murmured.

"Wait till the wind gets up, and you'll have waves enough," replied Barton, always practical, and devoid of an atom of sentiment.

"No, no; I don't want the wind to get up. I like the sea as it is at present best. Don't let the wind get up."

"Don't let it! how can I help it, Goosey?"

"I forgot," she replied meekly.

Did she think the peaceful attitude of the ocean a harbinger of a peace beyond the grave? Very likely.

"I suppose you think that because I can 'raise

the wind’ when I am hard up, that I can send it back to old Æolus when I want it calm?”

She did not hear him ; her mind was far away.

“Have another peach, Mill,” said Gentleman Barton, offering her one he had removed the skin from.

“No, thanks.”

“Some more wine?”

“Yes ; more wine,” she replied eagerly.

He filled her glass with iced Moselle (she would not drink claret or port), and she drank it with evident satisfaction.

Gentleman Barton felt himself in a good temper after his dinner ; and as his by no means sluggish blood was warmed by the wine he drank in large quantities, he took Milly’s hand in his, pressed it tenderly, and, mistaking passion for love, thought that all his old affection for her had revived. He did *not*, as a rule, like pallid, drooping beauties ; but in the present instance Milly was undoubtedly interesting. She was wan and weary-looking ; but he even found a charm in her,—the charm of novelty ; for he was accustomed to see her with rotund cheeks and a dimpled chin.

“I believe our destinies are united, Milly, my own,” he said.

“I hope not,” replied Milly.

“Still harping on that string ? Well, never mind. You’ll drop it when you’re tired of it, I suppose. A woman’s like a mule : if he won’t lead, you can’t drive her. But look here : if we were not destined

to run in double harness all our lives, why should we have met so oddly this morning?"

She shook her head.

"Go and play something, Milly. There is a piano in that corner. Will you? Do; there's a pet."

She rose, and allowed him to guide her to the piano. He opened it for her, and she sat down. Without hesitation her fingers fell upon the chords; and the solemn tones of "Cujus animam gementem"—that gem of the *Stabat Mater*—arose and filled the room. Then she began to sing, and the sweet Italian words, redolent of melody, and full of expressive grandeur, rang out upon the night-air. "Sol di Pianti" she began with an exquisite cadence. Barton threw himself on the ground at her feet, and let his head rest upon her lap. He was like Saul the king when David the shepherd strung his harp to soothe the melancholy potentate of a wayward nation. During the fleeting moments while the music lasted, he was in paradise. Milly ceased abruptly. Barton caught one of her hands in his, and covered it with kisses,—such hot, passionate, burning kisses.

"I feel now, Milly, how much I do love you," he exclaimed in a penitent voice. "Can you forgive me,—will you forgive me,—for all I have done to you, and all I have made you suffer?—can you, will you, my own, my ever-dearest one?"

"Yes," she replied, looking down at him pityingly.

"You will! Oh, thank you, bless you, for that.

I feel as if I could press you to my heart, and keep you there for ever, without a wish for any further happiness."

"Could you embrace me in the grave, Jack?"

He started, and beads of perspiration made their way to his forehead. What could she mean by her continued and persistent return to the subject of death?

Death! It took his breath away to contemplate the horrible vista that fell word opened up.

"Would you, Jack?" she repeated.

"What, darling?"

"Go down into the grave with me?"

"When?"

"Now."

"Now!"

"Yes; and take your chance of an awakening."

"How strangely you talk, Milly!"

"Do I? I am a little odd at times."

"Do you not feel well?"

"Not very. I shudder every now and then, as if I were afraid.

"Of what?"

"Of myself."

"Play something else, Mouse," he said, by way of diverting her thoughts.

"Not to-night, Jack."

"Yes; to please me," he urged.

"It will be a dirge, then, or a requiem."

"What you like."

She played something so sombre, so dismal, and

so melaucholy. and withal so touching, that when she finished Barton's eyes were moist.

"Strike up something lively" he exclaimed.

"I couldn't, Jack ; I couldn't, for the world, to-night. The transition would be so great. it would kill me."

She still sat on the music-stool, and ran her fingers slowly through his hair with one hand, while she monotonously touched the deep bass notes with the other, making them give out a knell-like sound, as if the bells of a church were tolling for the souls of the departed.

"I hope we shall live happily now, Milly," he said,—“happy ever afterwards, as the story-books say.”

"Too late," she replied, but in a tone so low as not to reach him.

"I'll tell you what. Milly, my girl," resumed Gentleman Barton : " I just want to make one more *coup*. and then I shall be all right. I've got it all cut and dried, all on the stocks. It is like a field of ripe wheat, and will be ready to cut in a day or two. When it comes off, we'll give this country the go-by, and sail for Yankee Land. The war won't hurt us. We can go to Saratoga Springs, or the Falls, and be as jolly as cocks. I'm getting tired of the life I'm leading. It's a great strain upon the brain, and begins to weary one, and tell upou a fellow after a time. Do you like travelling?"

"I used to."

"Don't you now?"

"I 'ou'n't take much interest in any thing now."

“But you ought to. You will presently, won’t you?”

“I wonder if I shall travel,” she murmured, “and where I shall go to?”

He did not understand her meaning then, although it all became clear to him afterwards.

“I’ve told you where.”

“You cannot tell me; no mortal voice can tell me,” she replied solemnly.

She continued to run her fingers through his hair, and the gentle motion was productive of a somnolent feeling, which gradually stole over his senses, and induced him to go to sleep.

An hour passed. The shadows fell, and darkened and deepened until the room was plunged in semi-darkness. Suddenly Milly gave expression to a sharp, joyous cry, muttering to herself:

“At last they are calling me. The time is come; I must go.”

Bending her gaze upon John Barton, she looked at him as Judith may have looked at Holofernes; but the muscles of her face relaxed, and she let his head fall gently down until it touched the carpet. He was in a sound sleep, and the change of position did not wake him. She glided from the room with the noiseless, stealthy motion of a snake, and sought her bedchamber. Attiring herself in her bonnet and shawl, she descended the stairs. The porter met her in the vestibule of the hotel.

“Porter,” she exclaimed.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“I am going for a walk. If my husband should

wake up and inquire for me, will you please tell him so?"

"Certainly, ma'am."

She passed out of the hotel, and as she went down the steps sang, in a low tone, the *Nunc Dimittis*, or "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

There were few people about, for it was getting late. Dark clouds flitted across the surface of the horizon, and the wind, which began to rise, moaned round the corners of the streets with a lugubrious sound, which to the minds of the superstitious portended something, if only a thunderstorm. The air was hot and sultry. Every breath of air was literally clogged with heat. Milly walked along briskly, and made towards the Chain Pier,—that singular and amorphous construction, which has defied storm and wind for more years than its enemies ever imagined it had the slightest chance of resisting. Paying the sum of twopence, the drowsy toll-taker gave her admittance through the highly polished turnstile, and Milly was alone upon the pier. The waves were not sleeping now. The wind was rising every moment, and lashing them to fury. They boiled and hissed, and heaved convulsively, as if some awful volcanic action were taking place far, far below amongst the mermaids' caves and coral habitations. She could hear them as they dashed up against the piles and supports of the pier, and she could feel the salt spray sprinkle her face.

And yet she was not alone, although she thought herself so; for had she not been so absorbed with

her thoughts, she would have distinctly heard the echo of footsteps behind her,—heavy-sounding footsteps—those of a man, not of a woman. The chains of the pier groaned and creaked, and seemed to be exercising and straining themselves in anticipation of the coming storm, as if they hardly thought themselves strong enough to bear the furious onslaught of the attacking tornado. Milly made her way to the extreme end of the pier, and stood leaning against the railings, poring into the bosom of the ocean. A gust of wind, rough and boisterous, carried away her veil, and her shawl a moment afterwards followed it. She gazed after the valuable lace, as it skimmed through the night-air, until it was no bigger than a man's hand; and then it disappeared from view, so that she took a sea-mew for it, until the harsh, weird screech of the bird of ill omen informed her of her mistake.

Ha! listen to that shock high up in the heavens. Hark at it! The clouds are beginning the frolic. Heaven is convulsed; and airy phantoms tilt at one another upon their vapoury steeds. That clap was grand. Hark, how it peals through the air, and seems to shake the old pier to its very foundations, deep down in the sandy bed of ever-shifting ocean! Mind your eyes! Put your hand up to your face! that flash of lightning will blind you else. Oh, how vivid it was; how it darted from the very bosom of the black and murky sky! Now stop your ears with your fingers. Make haste! It's coming! Did it deafen you? What an awful rattle, rattle, bang, bang, it created! What a grand

diapason ; and how sullenly it rolled off in the distance ! Shrilly shrieks the wind ; loud claps the dreadful thunder. How very dark the sky is ! It is almost a mercy for the lightning to illuminate the scene. God help us ! What was that awful crash ? Some mighty spire has been stricken, and is falling in stupendous ruin. Topple, topple. Do you hear the masses of brickwork descending to the ground ? It is miniature thunder.

Is Milly a lover of nature in convulsion, when the elements battle together like atmospheric Titans ? If so, she may have her fill of enjoyment now.

Look at that lurid glare in the town. Some dwelling-house has caught fire. The alarm-bell is ringing. The hoarse shouts of the frightened populace rise superior to the gale, and are borne over the surface of the sea. Man cannot sleep when the elements are at war.

Milly mounts the railings. Is she desirous of getting a better view of the house on fire ? Merciful powers ! she will fall into the sea. Her life is in jeopardy. Is there no one to save her in this critical conjuncture ?

Thank God, there is. But will his efforts prove availing ?

The man who had followed Milly had remained close to her, unobserved. He had pursued her in the first instance because he took her to be some *femme galante* inclined for an adventure. A flash of lightning revealed her form as she stood on the top of the wooden balustrade. The man darted forward ; but he was too late. She sprang into

the air, and a dull, thud-like splash proclaimed that she had sought and found a watery grave. It was next to madness for the man to jump into the sea after her. It was problematical whether he could have saved her in fine weather, but now—in the absence of a miracle—it was impossible. The sea was running strongly towards the opposite coast; the wind was blowing off the shore; the waves were increasing in size and magnitude every moment. What could he do? He shook his head sadly, and said:

“Better one than both of us.”

A despairing shriek was borne towards him. It was far out at sea, and sounded faintly.

In that one solitary death-cry, Milly—ill-fated, ill-starred, miserable Milly—poured out her soul.

“I wish I had been a little quicker in my movements,” exclaimed the young man, who retraced his steps.

He had not gone far, before a man carrying a lantern rushed up against him.

“Who are you?” he cried fiercely, holding up the lantern.

“Mr. Carruthers,” he exclaimed, as the light fell upon his features.

It was Gentleman Barton, who had come out after Milly.

When he found that she had left him, he feared the worst. His instinct—that strange and subtle thing—led him towards the pier. There he heard that a lady had gone through the turnstile. He borrowed a lantern, and ran, bareheaded, after the person he

supposed to be Milly. He was half frantic with apprehension. Turning to Carruthers, he exclaimed:

"Have you seen any one?"

"A woman?"

"Yes."

"I have."

"Tell me—tell me where. Speak—for God in heaven's sake, speak!" exclaimed Barton, in heart-broken accents.

Carruthers put his arm on Barton's shoulder, and replied: "She is beyond our help."

"Wh—what do you mean?"

"She is dead."

"No, no, no! It's false; you tell me a lie. I'll not believe it. You lie—lie foully, sir!"

"She committed suicide."

"And you saw her?"

"I did."

"Saw her, and let her perish, like a beast!"

"I could not help it."

"You shall follow her," said Barton frantically. "Look to yourself."

He grappled with him; but he was like a child in Carruthers' arms. At length, exhausted by his exertions, he fell down on the asphalted surface of the pier, and became insensible. The rain descended in torrents, and Carruthers put the lantern under his coat, to keep it from being extinguished.

"Man's wife, I suppose," he said. "Fellow seems to know me, too. Wonder who he is? Sorry for him, poor beggar!"

And he stood still in the beating rain, to wait Barton's return to consciousness.

Some time, however, elapsed before that desirable event took place.

The thunder and lightning were now over ; but the air was still impenetrably dark : not a star was to be seen ; not a glimpse of the moon was obtainable. The hoarse cries of the firemen were still borne by the wind from the shore ; and the flames leapt and darted into the night-air with a rapidity which denoted a serious conflagration.

CHAPTER XIII.

BARTON'S COUP.

TWICE seven days elapsed before John Barton was sufficiently himself to return to town and pay the requisite attention to the business of his life. Milly's death was a terrible blow to him, not only because it was unexpected, but from its horrible nature. Some fishermen found her body, and brought it with them to the shore. He knew well enough that she had destroyed herself, and so did Carruthers ; but neither of them hinted that such was the case. They led the authorities to infer that she had been blown off the pier in the gale, and that her death was the result of as pure an accident as had ever taken place in this ever-changing world of ours. So, as Mrs. Millicent Barton, she was decently buried in the little Brighton Cemetery, and the rights of

sepulture—as in cases of suicides—were not denied her. It was some comfort to down-stricken, sorrowing Barton to be able to put a small cross over her grave, and plant flowers and set shrubs around it. He had a small brass let into the foot of the cross, and on it was engraved, by his own instructions :

To the memory of

MILLICENT BARTON.

May her everlasting life be as calm as her earthly
existence was stormy !

There was little he could do for her now, much as he loved her, but that little he did—he gave her his name. She was a poor, worn, hunted, anonymous creature, a waif upon life's ocean, perhaps to be a stray upon an unknown shore ; but, as if to please and pacify her spirit, he called her his wife, and bore witness before men that she was his wife. It was a kindly action on his part ; he was making atonement for his callousness while she lived. It is the way with all of us : we never know one another's worth until the grave has closed over the gray hairs or the blooming cheek. Then we rail against Time—the avenger of all things, and the man with the scythe—who is pitiless and knows not mercy ; against the undertaker and his cerements ; against the grave-worm, that minute underground ghoul that is no respecter of persons.

For full a week John Barton undertook daily pilgrimages to the cross which marked the spot where Milly's remains were laid. At last he made an effort

and roused himself. He was becoming ill through an excess of sentimentalism. If he did not wish to be seriously unwell, it was incumbent upon him to shake off his incubus. So he pulled himself together, and packed up his traps and started for London, having first of all paid the gardener at the cemetery a handsome sum to perpetually keep Milly's grave in repair, and to replenish the stock of plants if any of them faded away.

Back again in town! There was a talismanic sound in that phrase which put new life into him. He was no longer the slouching, sorrow-stricken, mind-suffering man who was accustomed to wend his weary way through the hot and dusty streets of Brighton, and sit for hours by the side of a new-made grave, and pull his hat over his brows and weep when he thought that no one was looking at him — weep good, straightforward, honest tears, genuine and from the heart. I really think, if any good spirit or well-disposed Samaritan had, at that particular time, run across Barton, and taken him by the hand, he would, under such tutelage and guidance, have renounced the devil and some of his works, if not all of them; but, as it happened, no one met him, not a soul comforted him, and he returned to his old haunts and familiar associates hardened if chastened. He got his heart swept and garnished, and sent out invitations to all the reckless, stick-at-nothing demons who chanced to be abroad—such as Lust and Avarice, Intemperance, and a few more of such choice lieutenants of the King of Evil.

It was time for him to hear from Dick Stoffles, and his trusty messenger favoured him with a brief note, which intimated that he would shortly return to town. Barton immediately replied, telling him to do nothing of the sort. He directed him to meet him on the beach at Sonthend at twelve o'clock in the morning, in three days' time. Although surprised at what he considered an extraordinary—or, at all events, an eccentric—request, Stoffles made no objection, obeyed his orders, and, at the time appointed, stood on the shingles with his arms folded, and gazing at the sea.

A slap on the shoulders called him to himself. He turned abruptly round, and was confronted with Gentleman Barton.

“You are to your time, I see,” he exclaimed.

“When am I not?”

“When your horse doesn't run to the fore.”

Stoffles made a wry face.

A familiar voice fell upon their ears, and they perceived that their old friend of the Ruins, Joe the Patterer, was standing before them. Holding some songs in his hand, he struck up, in his monotonous, sing-song voice :

“Hoh ! Goodwood was a great success,
An awful crowded meeting ;
Hoh ! Little Stag he did his best,
And took a deal of beating.

The French 'oss wasn't to the mind
Of those he made to 'oller ;
The downy ones would give no change
For *the* Parisian Dollar.

Said he was no good at all,
Not fit to draw a dung-cart ;
Ten to one—"

"Here, stow that, Joe," cried Barton.

"Morning, sir."

"Take your hook," cried Dick Stoffles angrily, who did not like the interruption.

"Can you spare a trifle this morning, your honours? Times is hard ; they is, upon my word."

"If you don't go, I'll call a blue," shouted Dick Stoffles.

Joe, seeing it was useless for him to stay there, slunk away over the stones, vowing vengeance in his heart, and muttering :

"I wonder what those two coveys are after?—no good, I'll be bound. I'll keep my eyes open and my mouth shut."

"I wish that d— fellow hadn't spotted us," cried Gentleman Barton.

"He's off now."

"I know that ; but what do you suppose I asked you to meet me here for?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I'll tell you. I didn't want any one who knows us to see us together. Do you see now?"

"He's nobody," urged Dick.

"You can't tell. A link's a link in a chain of evidence ; and I've known a man laid by the heels through less a thing by a long chalk than our accidental meeting with Joe the Patterer."

"You needn't cry out before you're hurt."

"That *is* the time to cry out, my good fellow," replied Barton. "What's the good of waiting till the harm's done and the mischief accomplished?"

"There's something in that."

"Of course there is."

"Have you got any liquor?"

"What do you want?"

"A drop of brandy."

"I can give you a drain. But let's get into a boat; I can't talk to you here. If we hire a boat and row out half a mile or so, we shall have it all to ourselves, and no one can hear a word we say."

They made a bargain with a boatman to give him so much for the use of his boat for an hour and a half, and getting in, paddled out until the land receded a considerable distance from their sight.

"Here's the *eau de vie*," said Gentleman Barton, laying his sculls down in the boat, and handing a flask to Stoffles, adding: "Now, I'll just let the boat drift while we proceed to business. In the first place, how have you got on?"

"Capitally."

"You have the paper?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"Down there. It's safe enough."

"Why didn't you bring it with you?" cried Barton hastily; "I did not want you to go back there again."

"I'll undertake to be up in town to night with it."

"You promise that?"

"Certainly."

"Then it does not so much matter; but I would rather you had cleared out at once."

"You know, Barton, I do my best," began Stoffles, in an expostulatory tone.

"No, I don't, till I see what you have done," growled Barton.

"Any how, I've helped you all I can."

"I don't want any help; I can paddle my own canoe. I pay for assistance when I want it. I wanted you, and I've paid you."

"Half."

"Well, the other's waiting for you when you've done the work."

"That won't take me long."

"How much have you got?"

"Enough to make our fortunes with."

"*Our* fortunes!" ejaculated Barton. "What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing much," returned Dick Stoffles, with a leer.

"Speak out; let's have it."

"I mean this: a man doesn't want Bank-note paper to make curl-papers of, does he?"

"Might, if he had a fancy that way."

"You've got no fancy that way," replied Stoffles firmly. "I can see through your game, Barton, easier than a camel can go through the eye of a needle. Why, I tumbled to it as soon as ever you spoke to me in the Bell."

"A d— fine tumble too," replied Barton.

"It won't hurt. I dare say I can make it answer my purpose."

"And what may that be?"

"Just this : I want to stand in."

"Oh, you do ! Take this for your answer, then : It isn't part of my programme to let you do any thing of the sort. Now, what will you do ?"

"Spoil you."

"You can't do it, my boy ; I'll forgive you, if you do."

"You can't prevent me," said Dick Stoffles.

"It's no good your peaching, is it ?" exclaimed Gentleman Barton.

"No."

"You won't be able to work it by yourself?"

"No."

"What *can* you do, then ?"

"Leave the paper where it is, and drop it altogether," answered Stoffles.

"That you are quite at liberty to do," said Barton calmly.

Stoffles was astonished to find him in a state of such unruffled serenity after his announcement, which he thought calculated to disturb his equanimity in no small degree.

"You don't mind ?" he exclaimed.

"Not a straw."

"Why not ?—it would spoil your game."

"Of course it would ; but it wouldn't ruin me. That's only one iron out of many. I can afford to relinquish that idea, my friend ; but I have my doubts whether *you* can."

Stoffles made no reply. He felt the force of Barton's remarks, and was perfectly willing to admit to himself that the sum he had already received from his accomplice—for such he was—was not nearly sufficient for the supply of his wants. He had been away from the Ruins some time, and those to whom he owed money would be shaking their heads, and mentally posting him a defaulter. The intervention of Goodwood would afford him an excuse, because he could say that he had been down there and made his fortune, or at all events retrieved it by picking up a few "centuries." Goodwood, however, could not last for ever. It was already over, and his stay in the country could not be much longer prolonged without his character being blackened and blasted beyond redemption.

"Shall I give you another reason why you won't back out of this little affair, Dick Stoffles?" exclaimed Gentleman Barton.

Stoffles inclined his head.

"It wouldn't be nice for you to be collared by a peeler on a charge of stealing the tissue."

"Not exactly."

"They'd soon do it if I gave them the office."

"And you too."

"Not at all. I have nothing at all to do with the matter. Who would believe your vague allegations? Oh, no; I've got you as safe as houses this journey—tied by the leg, Dick Stoffles. Why, you're as much mine as if I were the arch-fiend, and had bought the reversion of your ungodly soul."

"You think so?"

"I'm sure of it. You couldn't be safer if you were an American nigger with a forty-pound chain riveted to his ankles."

"You like to hear yourself talk."

"It's no good your kicking, Dick Stoffles, not a bit. You may as well knock under soon as late."

"What will you give me?" asked Stoffles.

"What I promised you."

"That's not enough."

"It's all you'll get."

"I'd rather have nothing than that."

"Have nothing, then ; it's optional."

"That's not a fair way to treat a pal," said Stoffles, making an appeal *ad hominem*.

"Is a bargain a bargain, or is it not?"

"Yes."

"It is. All right. What did you agree to get this paper for?"

"A certain sum."

"Have you had it?"

"Part of it."

"Can you get the other part when you want it?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, what have you got to complain of? By your own showing, you are not sat upon."

"I'm so jolly hard up, Barton," replied Dick. "If I wasn't, I would not ask you."

This was the appeal *ad misericordiam*, which was put in practice because the other one had failed.

"You haven't asked me," cried Barton, who was very irate.

"What then?"

"You've tried to best me."

"I don't see how you can make that out."

"Oh, yes, you did. You've tried to best me just as much as if I'd been a yokel, and not fly to your swindling games."

"Well, look here."

"No, I won't. I'd rather ever so much you'd come up to me on a common, with a pistol in each hand, and told me to stand and deliver. I hate being bested. If you'd said to me in a decent sort of way, 'Come, Barton, I've done this job well; tip us another hundred quid,'—I'd have done it like a bird; but I can't stand your besting games, d— if I can. I like a fellow to act honestly and straightforwardly by me."

It was odd to hear a man who was at that very time perpetrating a Bank-note robbery on a colossal scale talk in so forcible a style of virtuous indignation. But it was, I suppose, an exemplification of the adage that there is honour amongst thieves,—a well-worn saying, which some students of human nature (looking at the said human nature from a klepto-maniacal point of view) have taken the liberty to doubt.

"I don't think you've any call to go on at me like that," said Stoffles, who felt himself baffled, and, added to a sense of failure, a feeling of cowardly meanness.

"Take the skulls and row back to the shore," said Barton. "I haven't the patience to touch them, I'm that upset."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know."

"What's upset you?"

"The way you're going on."

"I'll put it in a nutshell for you, shall I?"

No answer.

"Give me another fifty counters, and I'll bring you the paper to night before ten o'clock."

"What's the good of working with a pal who's half-hearted? It is worse than a sold race, or a cooked handieap," replied Barton.

"Will you do it?"

There was a momentary hesitation about Barton; and then he replied:

"I'll give you thirty."

"Make it forty. Split the difference, and make it forty."

"Thirty-five."

"Seven ten."

"All right; thirty-seven pounds ten. You to meet me with the tissue at—let me see—?"

"Dick the Fiddler's?"

"Well, say Dick the Fiddler's, at or before ten o'clock to-night. Is that right?"

"That's right."

"Done. Give us your fist on it."

The two men shook hands, and the bargain was complete.

"Not another word about it," exclaimed Barton; "don't you forget that. We'll just have some grub on our way to the station; and you'll start for Stoke while I go back to the little village."

Dick Stoffles intimated assent; and taking up

the sculls, paddled back to the shore. As they landed, they might have perceived Joe the Patterer watching them from behind a bathing-machine ; but not thinking to find him there, they kept their eyes fixed straight before them, and he escaped their notice. Joe dogged their footsteps, and watched them into the railway-train, looking at all the people who got out at the different stations, and ultimately alighted at Stoke.

Dick Stoffles struck off across some fields ; but his pursuer was after him. It was not so much against Barton as against Stoffles that he seemed to have a grudge. Perhaps he suspected that some iniquity was brewing, and thought it would be worth his while to unravel it. Why did he not follow Gentleman Barton, who was evidently the principal ? Did he think he would gain more by following the tool, the instrument, the machine ?

If so, he was not at all wrong.

Gentleman Barton returned to town, little thinking that he had by his excessive caution placed the success of his important scheme in peril.

But so it was. He had over-reached himself.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT BIRMINGHAM.

THERE was a man who lived at Birmingham and went by the name of "Brummagem Bill;" his real name was Isaac Watts. He was celebrated as the cleverest engraver that the town contained ; but he

was an idle man, and seldom did any work if he could avoid that disagreeable proceeding. He was known to a certain set in London, who gave him odd jobs occasionally, and paid him well for them; simply because they were jobs no one else would execute for them, through fear of police supervision and scrutiny. This was the man Gentleman Barton fixed upon as a likely fellow to engrave some plates, and knock off a few thousand five-pound notes for him, manufactured out of the stolen Bank-note paper, which was invaluable to the forger, as it bore upon its surface the wonderfully intricate water-mark which it is next to impossible to imitate. It was a hot day when Barton arrived at Birmingham, and the stronghold of radicalism is not a nice place in hot weather; quite the reverse. The sun streamed down upon the panting pedestrians with a violence that threatened to bake them where they were standing. If you had focussed a man with a burning-glass, it would have burned a hole in the flesh in less than a minute. Pulverised particles flew about with every sirocco-like gust of wind, and entered your ears, your mouth, your nose, and got down your shirt-collar, making you feel as if you had just had your hair cut by a careless barber—not a pleasant sensation at any time, but next to intolerable in warm weather. The heat raised a gauzy kind of film in the air, which floated up and down before your eyes like the fluttering wings of a dragon-fly; the vagrant curs who made the streets their home, because no one would own them and pay twelve shillings a year for them, positively gasped for breath, and looked as if they

could not have attacked an appetising piece of garbage to save themselves from getting a bad name, which every body knows is as good as being hanged. That particular year of grace in which Barton visited Birmingham was a year long remembered by Englishmen. The sun burnt the crops out of the ground; the hay was made before it was cut; the corn was garnered into the barns in July, but the yield of grain was hardly worth sufficient to pay the men who wielded the sickle; the market-gardens were scorched up; wells ran dry, and water sold at sixpence a bucket; cattle were packed off to market and sold at a sacrifice, because there was nothing to feed them on; the grass was burned where it stood, and there was no possibility of a crop of mangolds or turnips. The consequence was, that during the drought meat was cheap, but when the winter came then mutton rose to a shilling a pound and more, whilst beef was beyond the reach of poor people. This was what the hot dry summer did for England. Men who advertised food for cattle made a fortune, and the water-companies thought themselves justified in raising their rates.

Gentleman Barton, after walking a hundred yards or so from the station, gave up the attempt to go any further in despair; he called a cab, and ordered the man to drive him to the residence of Isaac Watts. This was a house of some size, situated in a densely populated and busy part of the town. The engraver was at home, and answered the door in person. "Who do you want?" he exclaimed in a hard, dry tone peculiar to him.

Barton saw standing before him a man below the average height, with a sinister, forbidding countenance, in which eyes of great size, indicating audacity, were deeply set. His mouth was large and the lips thick, while the nostrils were broad at the base and dilated ; his hands were thick and clumsy. He was stout, and could boast of a formidable abdominal development, showing that he was either dropsical or fond of good eating and drinking. His slightly rubicund nose bore out the latter impression.

"Mr. Watts?" replied Barton.

"That is my name. You come on business, I presume?"

"I do."

"Pray step in."

Barton followed the engraver into a room on the ground-floor, scantily furnished, and fitted up as a workshop. Watts motioned his visitor to a chair, and taking up his position behind a desk, adjusted a pair of spectacles over his nose, and scrutinised him closely, waiting for him to speak first.

"I was recommended to you by a gentleman in London of the name of Lemon Peel."

This was a slang name for one of the most famous receivers of stolen goods in the metropolis.

"Ah," replied Watts, "I have met Mr. Peel, and done business for him."

"You know his handwriting, I suppose?"

"Perfectly."

"Here is a letter from him to yourself, just hinting at the object of my visit."

Barton took a note from the lining of his hat,

where he had hitherto carried it, and handed it to the engraver, who received it with a bow, opened it slowly, read it carefully, and then, allowing a smile to steal over his stolid face, exclaimed, "You must excuse me, Mr. Barman."

"Barton."

"Barton,—ah, so it is,—excuse me, I read it wrongly ; but I am always cautious with strangers. I had no idea that I was in the society of a pal, and one so distinguished as yourself. Just be good enough to follow me up-stairs. I was going to sit down to a little snack, and shall feel honoured by your company."

They went up-stairs together, and Isaac Watts ushered Barton into a room filled with handsome and luxurious furniture. Here there were flowers, mirrors, pictures, books, fountains falling into basins filled with gold and silver fish, velvet-pile carpets, and curiously carved chairs and tables ; upon a side-table a cold repast was laid out, and in a silver ice-tub stood several bottles of champagne, claret, and other wines of a costly description ; a cold chicken, a cold duck, a gosling, a ham, some Strasbourg pies, and fat liver patties. If that was a snack, Barton wondered what, in the name of Soyer, a dinner at Birmingham was. If this was a specimen of its lunches, a *primo mane* collation was not a sham, like most of its jewelry.

"Now, then, my dear sir, sit down and make yourself at home. I don't intend to stand upon ceremony with you," exclaimed Mr. Watts.

Barton, nothing loth, took a seat at the table,

drank some sparkling hock, the delicious flavour and coolness of which gave him an appetite, and he did justice to the good cheer which the engraver set before him.

"I had no idea of finding a Lucullus down here," Barton said, helping himself to a *pâté de foie gras*.

"Epicurus is not dead, my dear sir ; he lives in the present generation, as well as in those which have intervened since the friends of the 'garden' held high revel and rivalled the Cyrenaic philosophers," replied Isaac Watts sententiously.

This speech excited Barton's wonder more than ever. Watts saw his bewilderment, and said, with a cheerful smile, "You expected to find a working-man, did you not ? Come now, tell me."

"I confess I did."

"A clod, and nothing more."

"A mechanical clod."

"Quite so. That is well put, and you have discovered—?"

"From all I can see, an accomplished gentleman, of elegant taste and—"

"That will do very well. I am averse to compliments of all kinds, but I have just listened to a speech I should have expected from Gentleman Barton."

"You have heard of me?"

"Frequently. Now, I'll bet something, Mr. Barton, that you are dying with curiosity to know my history."

"I will not deny it."

"That's right ; always be frank and open with

friends ; reserve humbug, or what our London friends would call 'kid,' for strangers and those we wish to 'take in,' although not in a Samaritan or biblical sense."

"I don't wish to be inquisitive or intrusive," began Barton.

"Certainly not ; but I am in a communicative humour to-day, and as I have been fortunate enough to meet a delightful companion, I feel that it would please me to draw aside a veil that has not been lifted for many years. You would hardly believe it, but I was a schoolmaster once."

"Indeed !"

"I was, however, unfortunate in the business, and I gave it up. London was the next scene of action that I patronised, and I finally settled down here as an engraver."

Barton laughed, saying, "I thought, from your preliminary remarks, I was going to hear a story."

"You have heard the outline of one."

"The lifted veil has not disclosed much."

"When Moses stood on the mountain, he only had a glimpse of the promised land. He could not test the quality either of the milk or the honey ; by the way, they must have been badly off for cream there, —if the land was continually running with milk, it would never have had time to settle and throw the cream to the surface. Have you finished your lunch ?"

"Thank you, yes."

"Then we will proceed to business. Try a little of this claret. It is the best Lafitte."

"I want you to copy a document for me," exclaimed Gentleman Barton.

"You want a fac-simile?"

"Yes."

"Of what?"

Barton drew a five-pound note from his pocket, and spread it on the table, saying: "Of this."

"That!" exclaimed Watts; "and of what use would a fac-simile of that be to you, or any one?"

"Of the greatest use."

The engraver laughed.

"To make a use of this," he said, laying his hand on the note, "you should have a peculiar and rare sort of paper."

"I have it," returned Barton, with composure.

"A copy?"

"No, the original."

"Give me your hand," cried Watts, with unqualified admiration displayed upon his countenance. "You have exalted talent to the rank of genius."

Barton exhibited some of the note-paper, and Isaac Watts carefully compared it with the printed promise to pay of the Bank of England.

"I should have two plates," he said.

"Two?"

"One for fives, the other for tens."

"I have no objection."

"Have you made arrangements for the disposal of the notes in London?"

"Yes; I can get rid of a decent quantity at half-price."

"Good. Now, one more question."

"Certainly."

"What sum will content you?"

"Nothing under twenty thousand pounds."

"To accomplish that, you must issue forty thousand pounds' worth of notes. For my part, I shall be satisfied with five thousand pounds."

"You shall have it."

"That will run us up to fifty thousand, eh?"

"Exactly."

"That will be two thousand five hundred tens, and double that number of fives?"

"Not much to float on the commercial world."

"No, not much; but quite enough to do with safety. Have you sufficient paper for that amount?"

"You shall judge for yourself," replied Barton, exhibiting two parcels he had brought with him.

Watts unpacked the parcels, and after making a rough mental calculation, said: "I do not think you have over-estimated your stock. You will have England, I suppose, when you have finished your business in London?"

"I shall."

"As soon as I have struck off the notes, I shall destroy the plates and the presses, for my own sake, in case the police should make a descent on my small territory."

"You will act wisely."

"We have said all we can say about the matter, I think," continued the engraver. "I hate talking more than I can help about important affairs."

"So do I."

"Very well. We must not be seen together more than we can help. You call on me to-morrow—no, the day after, in the evening—and I will show you a specimen proof of both tens and fives. Where do you stay?"

"At the Royal."

"The Royal. I will remember, in case I should want you. Does Peel take any off you?"

"Some. You will find a ready sale for yours at his place."

"That will do. Now let me offer you a cigar. Do you like Moselle cup?"

"Very much."

"In that case, let me make some for you. I will answer for it, you like it."

Isaac Watts went to a chiffonier and took from it a handsome silver goblet, upon which an inscription was written.

"read that," he said to Barton.

Barton read the inscription; which was to the effect, that the donor of the vase considered his present utterly inadequate, as a remuneration, for the service that Mr. Watts had rendered him in saving the lives of his three sons while bathing in the river Severn.

"So you are a philanthropist?"

"I do not hate my species, although I have my doubts about their origin."

"You read abstruse and speculative philosophy?"

"I read Darwin."

The more Barton conversed with this singular

man, the more surprised he was; and he left him with that delightful sensation we all experience when we have quitted the society of an amiable and agreeable companion.

On returning to his hotel, Barton ordered a cup of tea and an anchovy toast; after which he went to a theatre, and subsequently to a night-house,—for he had heard that the Birmingham bagnios were perfectly able to compete with their metropolitan rivals. He had been to Polly Chester's at Manchester, and he was ambitious of taking stock of similar institutions in the town in which he was located. It has been stated that Birmingham is chiefly famous for sham jewelry, radical politicians, dog-fighting, and pugilism; perhaps that cumbrous phrase, the social evil, may be added as a fifth staple production. People go so far as to say that social evils are manufactured in the town by wholesale, and sent up cheap, in a rough and ready way, to London, where the demand is always equal to the supply.

Gentleman Barton did not find much difference between London and Birmingham, only the women of the latter place were, if any thing, a little more vulgar in their appearance, and coarser in their language. The wine was equally bad, the brandy equally drugged, fiery, and undrinkable; the waiters equally saponaceous, grasping, and extortionate; and the set of men frequenting the establishments, in tone and manner very far inferior to those to be met with in London.

The next morning a letter arrived from town for

Barton, who at once recognised the handwriting of Dick Stoffles.

“MY DEAR BARTON” (Stoffles wrote),—“I think the table is rather rickety. I have my suspicions of a plant, so I should advise you to be leery, and keep your weather-eye open. Joe the Patterer is my tip. He’s been dodging me any how, and if he knew any thing, would at once blow the gaff. Put the drag on, for things look serious. If this state of things continues, I shall hedge at once, and hook it off for Brummagem, and join you at the Royal. From what I see, I expect the Stoke people are alive to our little game, and the blues will, if I am not mistaken, be in full blare before long—worse luck. Dear Barton, you may think I have sold you; but may I drop down dead if I have! I’m game to the backbone, and would risk Norfolk Island any day in the week sooner than sell a pall. So help me Bob, I would. I can’t quite understand the caper yet, but if any thing fresh turns up I’ll telegraph at once. If you get a wire saying ‘Ware hawks,’ you’ll know the bobbies are up and doing, and you’d better slope for Liverpool, or else it’ll be hot for all of us.

“Yours obediently and truly,

“DICK STOFFLES.”

The surprise of King James, when the letter hinting mysteriously at the Gunpowder Plot was laid before him, was not more profound than that of Gentleman Barton when reading this remarkable epistle. His first impression was, that Stoffles had,

for the sake of a reward and pardon, betrayed him. The way in which the letter was worded tended very much to confirm his suspicion ; and setting his teeth closely together, he vowed a vengeance which sounded very terrible, but which would have been carried out to the utmost syllable had the occasion for such harshness arisen. He scarcely knew what to do in so perplexing an emergency. If he went to Isaac Watts and told him he had reason to believe the police had obtained scent of the robbery of Bank-note paper at Stoke, the engraver would most probably throw up the business, and Barton would be left with the tissue upon his hands, which would be equivalent to his enterprise turning out abortive. This was the last thing in the world that he wished for. He was so tired of England, and so sick and weary of his associates and course of living, that he was desirous, above all things, of going to the United States, there to begin again, and inaugurate a fresh career as a merchant. The money he expected to derive from the sale of his spurious Bank-notes would enable him to speculate to some extent ; and he hoped that no one would recognise in John Barton, the wealthy merchant of Boston, Mass., the Gentleman Barton of London, the leviathan of the Ruins, and the *mouchard* of the Haymarket.

This was as pretty a vapoury castle as a sanguine man ever indulged in. There was only one fault about it, and that was, it happened to be too flimsy and unsubstantial. Barton was one of those wonderfully credulous individuals who lie down on their backs in the sunshine, and bask there, expecting the

heavenly pigs to fall down into their mouths ready roasted.

The time appointed by the engraver for his second interview with Barton speedily arrived. Barton left his hotel to hurry to Watts's house, and as he reached the last step and stood in the street, he fancied he heard a voice, with which he was familiar, say, "That is the man."

This singular *ecce homo* exclamation made him turn sharply round; but so dense was the crowd of people hurrying to and fro, that he was unable to distinguish any one in particular.

"Strange!" he muttered to himself; "I could have sworn that was Joe the Patterer's voice; but I suppose I must have been mistaken."

Dismissing the incident from his memory, he made his way to the engraver's, and was let in, as before, by Isaac Watts himself.

"Good morning," exclaimed Barton. "How have you got on with your work?"

"Excellently."

"The hot weather has not interfered with you?"

"Not in the least."

"You are a wonderful fellow, by Jove! for whilst this heat lasts I am good for nothing. All I can do is to lie on my back and smoke."

"A nice way of passing one's time; but hardly a profitable one. I should say," replied the engraver. "Follow me up-stairs, will you? and I will show you the proofs I promised."

He was ushered into a large room, and left by himself for a brief space. Iced drinks of various

descriptions were at his disposal ; and, as he was one of those men who are constitutionally so thirsty that they never refuse any thing in the shape of liquor that is offered them, he did not fail to help himself to some seltzer and hock.

The engraver was not long absent. When he returned, he handed four notes to Barton.

"Two are genuine, the other two are forged ; pick out the latter, if you can."

Barton accepted the challenge ; but was not long in discovering that it was utterly impossible to detect the forgery, so well was it executed.

"Wonderful !" he exclaimed.

"Marvellously well done, is it not ?" remarked Watts, with a complacent smile.

"It is, indeed. I do not see an iota of difference."

"Nor is there."

"If they are all like this, we shall pass them *ma steam*."

"I will guarantee them."

"How soon will you work me off a couple of thousand ?"

"I can do them at the rate of a thousand a day. I have a press up-stairs moved by steam-power ; but as I have no assistant in this business, I cannot get through my work as quickly as I otherwise should be able to ; but I should imagine that a thousand a day would be quite sufficient for you to go on with. You do not want to flood the market ?"

"Certainly not."

"Hark !" suddenly exclaimed the engraver.

Barton listened.

"Do you hear any thing?"

"There is a knock at the door."

"So I thought. Stay here while I go down and see who it is. I will soon rid myself of them."

Isaac Watts ran down to dismiss his importunate visitors; but they were not so easily disposed of as he fondly imagined. On opening the door, he was confronted with two individuals of forbidding aspect, one of whom placed his foot in the doorway directly he had a chance of doing so. This movement might have been accidental; but to the tutored mind and experienced eye of the engraver it heralded a hostile intention on the part of the new-comers.

"Gentleman of the name of Barton here?" exclaimed one of the men.

"No," replied Watts.

"Haven't seen him, I suppose?"

"Never heard of him. Good morning."

"No, it ain't 'good morning' yet. It's **very** much t'other, eh, Jack?"

His companion laughed.

"We want John Barton."

"I am sure you are perfectly welcome to him if you can find him.

"Just what we mean to do, my Beneul."

The engraver made a desperate attempt to slam the door in their faces; but they were not to be so repulsed.

"Look here, old gentleman: we may as well understand one another as not. It's as easy to be on a friendly footing at this stage of the proceedings as at any other."

"Well?"

"Well, it just comes to this, all square and ~~so~~ flies: we're two police-officers, and we've got a warrant out for the apprehension of John Barton, *alias* Gentleman Barton."

"What is that to me?" replied Isaac Watts, who had turned deadly pale, but who seemed determined not to betray Barton.

"Why, this is what it has to do with you. We've tracked Barton into your house, and if you oppose us in the execution of our duty, we shall have to take you too."

So unexpected was this application, that Watts did not know how to escape from the serious dilemma in which he found himself. He was by no means certain that the surrender of Barton would be the salvation of himself; but it was of the utmost importance to him that he should have time to throw his plates and the stolen Bank-note paper into a furnace, so as to destroy them, and obliterate all the *evidentia rei* as regarded himself. While he was hesitating, the man exclaimed:

"With or without your permission, we are going to search the house. We've had the office given us, and we're all the way there and back again, ain't we, Jack?"

"That we are, and no mistake about it," replied his companion.

Scarcely knowing what to do, the engraver rushed up-stairs, and left the detectives, or warrant-officers, or whatever they might be, to do as they pleased. Bursting into the drawing-room, startled,

panting, and out of breath, he cried, "We're betrayed. The police are at the door with a warrant for your arrest."

"Sold, by G—!" exclaimed Barton, placing his hand in his pocket, and cocking a small revolver he never travelled without.

The men now made their appearance. The odds were equal : two against two.

"Come, Mr. Barton," exclaimed the leader of the two officers, "you and I have met before to-day. It's an ugly bit of business, but it's no good resisting. You're bound to go along of us ; so you'd better take it quietly, and you'll be let down easier."

Barton's feelings at that dreadful moment were too acute and painful to be described. His soul sank within him, for he saw his darling scheme nipped in the bud ; but he still preserved his presence of mind. The engraver, who stood near the doorway, was making frantic signs to him to keep the police engaged in conversation. Barton apprehended his meaning, and resolved to do any thing that lay in his power to aid or to save Watts. So he put the best face he could upon the matter, and turning with all the coolness he had at his command to the officer who had addressed him, and who was an intelligent sergeant in the C Division, he said, "Well, Jackson, let's hear all about it."

"It's soon told, Mr. Barton. There's been a Bank-note robbery, and you're suspected of being in it."

"Has any one split upon me ? that is—confound

my tongue!" he muttered to himself—"who is your informant?"

"I don't know the rights of it; but they said up at the station that a tramping fellow, called Joe the Patterer, let on to collar a reward offered by the bank."

"Joe! no one else?"

"Not as I've heard on."

"Oh! Will you take any thing? You are not in a hurry, I suppose?"

"I don't mind if I do. What do you say, Jack?"

Jack replied in the affirmative, and smacked his lips as he saw a treat in prospect.

"My mate's pretty nigh dead with the heat."

"So is every body else. Who else have you warrants out against?"

"Only one."

"Who is he?"

"Chap of the name of Dick Stoffles. Not of much account, so I am told."

"Is he in custody?"

"Yes; safe and sound."

Barton gave each of the policemen a brimming goblet of sparkling wine; and then drawing Jackson's arm within his own, took him to the window, and said in a low tone, "I've something to say to you, Jackson; and half a dozen words will do it. What will you take to square this little job?"

"Couldn't do it, Mr. Barton. It's too serious," replied the man, gravely shaking his head.

"Oh, nonsense. State the figure."

"It won't wash."

"But I tell you it will. Now, don't be a fool. Look here. What will you get for nailing me, and putting me in quod?"

"Nothing to speak of."

"Very well. Then what's the good?"

"It won't do, Mr. Barton. Your ticket's taken for the jug, and you're bound to go."

"So you won't listen to reason? Now, I've a quiet little barker in my pocket in the shape of a revolver with three chambers; and if you're not open to an offer, you'll go to glory before your time. I'm a determined man, Jackson, and I'd as soon be hanged as transported for life."

There was a strange, wild, maniacal light burning in Gentleman Barton's eyes, and Jackson saw it. He saw, too, that he would be as good as his word. So he secretly indulged the idea of entertaining a compromise.

"Come, make haste. Say what you will take," urged Barton, seeing the hesitation of the man, and clicking the lock of his pistol nervously.

"Since you've put the screw on, Mr. Barton, I'll take a cool hundred."

"A cool hundred? You shall have it. Here's thirty on the nail; and you shall have the rest before you leave Birmingham," replied Barton.

Barton gave the man the notes Watts had left with him, two of which were good and two were bad. He took them unsuspectingly, and put them in his pocket with a smile of satisfaction.

Just then the engraver reëntered the room, and

a significant glance passed between himself and Barton, by which the latter knew that every trace of his complicity in the late robbery had been destroyed.

"I shall wish you good morning," exclaimed Barton. "I have a little journey to make with my friends. I owe this gentleman some money, and I must go to my hotel for it, unless—"

"You need not take the trouble," interrupted Watts. "Is it a large sum? If not, I can supply you, I think. I usually keep as much in the house as I want for my pressing necessities."

"A hundred pounds."

"Oh, that's nothing. I think I have as much as that about me."

He produced the amount in gold from a cupboard, and Barton paid it over to Jackson.

"Is your friend all right?" he asked, pointing to Jackson's assistant.

"Good as gold, sir."

"That will do. Shall I give him any thing?"

"No occasion. I'll settle with him. When do you leave Brummagem, sir?"

"In an hour's time."

"Then I wish you a good day—Servant, sir," he added to Mr. Watts.

The two men then withdrew. Watts followed them down-stairs, saw them out, and returned to Barton.

"A narrow shave," he exclaimed.

"I never had a closer."

"Of course those two fellows have only gone for assistance."

"That's all. I frightened Jackson by telling him I would put a bullet through his brain, and that choked him off. But I know him so well, that I can tell you exactly what he will do."

"What?"

"First of all, he will go into a public-house and have something to drink ; then he will go to the chief police-office in the town, and get half a dozen detectives to help him : so that this house will be too hot to hold us."

"They cannot prove any thing against me ; for I have thrown my plates into a furnace, and the copper is melted down by this time."

"And the paper?"

"That is destroyed."

"It is a pity ; but it can't be helped," said Barton, with a sorrowful sigh. "It was as fine an enterprise as a man ever planned."

"It was all that."

"I must be off somewhere, and lie *perdu* for a time."

"I shall stay here and stand the racket ; I'm not afraid."

"They cannot implicate you, and I'm glad of it," said Barton ; "nothing would have grieved me more than to have got you into trouble. I trust we shall meet again soon. Excuse my brevity, and the hurried nature of my departure."

"Don't say a word," replied Isaac Watts in a friendly tone. "Let's have a glass of wine together before you go."

"With pleasure."

"Well, here's fortune," exclaimed Gentleman Barton, raising the glass to his lips.

"May she never be fickle!" replied Watts.

Barton pressed his hand; and in half an hour's time was driving rapidly along the road in a hired trap to Derby. He knew that there were no telegraphs on the highway; and he intended to go from Derby to some quiet country village, where he could take lodgings, rusticate, flirt with an unsuspecting damsel, betray her if she would let him, go in for angling, and brood over the mutability of human affairs.

In the mean time Dick Stoffles was languishing in the soul-chilling cell of a City prison.

CHAPTER XV

HOW FANNY TOOK THE NEWS.

WHEN his load of misery was very heavy, and almost more than he could bear, Dick Stoffles thought of his daughter—thought that she might probably be induced to take pity upon him, and visit him in the cruel solitude of his prison. So he sat himself down and wrote her a letter, which was calculated to excite her disgust rather than her pity. He called her his dear, misguided daughter, and told her how he had been laid by the heels for touching property which did not belong to him; how bitterly he repented of his error; and how he had been led astray by a designing scoundrel, to whose specious pretexts he

had yielded because he was penniless and in a desperate condition. He told her, with many a whining interjection, that if she had relieved his pressing necessities on the night when he called upon her in the crescent, all the misery that had happened would have been averted; and he concluded by begging and praying her to come to his assistance with her invaluable moral support, and visit him in his misery.

Fanny had been out for a ride in the morning; and when she alighted at the door of her house, Rose exclaimed:

“There’s a gentleman up-stairs, miss.”

This was generally the burden of Rose’s song. If Fanny had been out any length of time, there was always a “gentleman up-stairs.”

‘Who is he, Rose?’

“I don’t know, miss.”

“Has he been here before?”

“I think he has, but not more than once, or I should know him better.”

Fanny hurried up-stairs, and dashed into the drawing-room in her usual impetuous haste; but recoiled suddenly with a jerk as she saw Wormald sitting in an arm-chair, turning over the pages of a book, and smoking with his usual equanimity.

“Ah!” he playfully exclaimed, “how do you do? I am a man of my word: I promised that I would come and see you again, and, lo, here I am.”

“You’ll very soon go out again.”

“You wouldn’t be so unkind!”

“You’ll see, if you live long enough,” replied

Fanny, raising her riding-whip, and advancing to him, with her habit slung over her arm.

"Why fatigue yourself," exclaimed Wormald, "when you want a little rest?"

"Never mind that."

"You cannot possibly injure me in any way, for I have taken the precaution to pad myself from head to foot. Come, now, let us be friends; allow the hostility of the horsebreaker to sink into the gentle intercourse of Belgravian existence. I assure you, my dear child, that Lola Montes-ism is a mistake; men don't care about it. When it first became fashionable, it had the charm of novelty to recommend it; but in history, if my memory serves me, we nowhere read that Nell Gwynne pulled Charles II.'s whiskers, or that Louise de Querouailles chastised him with a dog-whip. Such proofs of affection are more energetic than convincing."

Fanny lowered her whip whilst Wormald was speaking, and listened attentively to him.

"I did not call upon you to-day to anger you, or even to inquire after that dear boy Watkins, who must, I feel sure, have grown in favour with both God and man since his acquaintance with so lovely a creature as your peerless self."

"I don't like that rot," said Fanny. "Why don't you cut such bosh, and talk decent English?"

"Sweet instructress—"

"What did you call for?"

"I called, *étoile de ma vie*—"

"What's that?" she abruptly demanded.

"Star of my life, to say that I have taken the

liberty of buying a horse for you. The beast will be here in half an hour ; and if you do not take off your habit, you will have an opportunity of seeing if he comes up to the warranty—to wit : that he is quiet to ride and drive.”

“ You think he is all that ? ”

“ I have every reason to believe so.”

“ As you have made amends, I will forgive you.”

“ Are we friends ? ”

“ Yes—for the present.”

“ It is unfair to tag a condition to so gracious an announcement.”

“ Wait here five minutes, will you ? I want to change my skirt. It is so jolly hot, and I can easily slip it on again. If you wish for any liquor, you will find lots in the sideboard.”

“ Do you happen to want a neat-handed Phillis to give any assistance ? ” he said, with a smile.

“ If I do, I’ll ring for you.”

“ It would be a labour of love.”

“ I’ve no doubt of that,” she replied, with a ringing laugh, leaving the room as she spoke.

Wormald lighted a cigar, and waited her return with philosophic calmness.

“ She’ll like the mare I’ve bought her,” he said half aloud, “ if she’s any judge of horse flesh—which, *par parenthèse*, women very seldom are. The horse is a clipper ; perfect every where. Legs that might walk on your velvet carpet without crashing the pile, or could dance a minuet with any horse that ever played at Astley’s.”

When Fanny Carruthers returned, she held a

letter in her hand, which she threw on the table, saying :

“Open that letter and read it for me, will you ? I hate reading my own letters—it is so much trouble.”

Fanny went to the sideboard to get out some wine, and Wormald opened the letter.

“Shall I read it aloud, or make you a *précis* of it ?”

“Oh, make a *précis*. I suppose it is from some fool or other—perhaps from a man I met yesterday in the Park. You know, I was nearly killed yesterday morning. My horse bolted, and managed to shy me ; but, by the biggest fluke you ever heard of, I fell on my legs, just as if I were dancing and had been doing a wonderful *pas* which necessitated a little extra saltatory exertion. Some swell came up, rather an old man, and complimented me on my agility. He said he rather admired the Lydia-Thompson sort of way in which I had spun through the air, and, giving me his card, asked if he might drop me a line. I thought I should have died with laughing at something he said just as he was going away.”

“What was that ?”

“He put his old head close to my face, and whispered : ‘Be discreet, and we may come to some permanent arrangement.’”

“Devilish good !”

“Wasn’t it ?”

“Who was he ?”

“I forget his name ; but he was some bigwig

who hailed from the Carlton. Now, see how quickly you can condense that letter, and I will tell you if you are any good to the Civil Service."

"Have you any interest in that quarter?"

"A little. I made an accountant-general once."

"No!" cried Wormald, much amused.

"I did, though. It was a quiet little backstairs dodge. Do you want a clerkship for any one?"

"I shouldn't mind one in the Foreign Office."

"The Foreign Office!"

"Yes."

"Ah, then I can't help you. I can do any thing for you in Pall Mall; and there's the Customs."

"Ah! tide-waiting."

"Is that what they call it?"

"You've no interest in the Foreign Office?"

"None at all."

"That's a pity; for I know a promising young fellow, who might do well if his mental faculties didn't utterly collapse occasionally. He's a sort of cousin of mine, and comes out of Earlswood to-morrow after a six months' stay."

"Does it run in the family?" asked Fanny archly.

"I really don't know; what do you think?"

"There's not much of it about you; as regards your cousin, I suppose you think, if you give him red tape enough, he will hang himself."

"I'll certainly put your suggestion to him."

"Do; it's to be hoped he'll take it. What will you have?"

"Any thing you can put your hand on."

"The usual thing, as they say at Kate's?"

"If you please. Talking of Kate's reminds me of the new Act. I suppose all those places are knocked on the head?"

"Completely, I hear; and a good job too."

"You think so?"

"I'm sure of it. The people who keep those places are beasts, harpies, vultures, and behave d—badly to the women. Why, it ruins a woman's health, and cleans all the men out. Women, my dear fellow, will get on as well again now. Fellows will go home with them and give them twice as much tin, instead of spending it in a lot of muck that no one can drink without being made sick and ill. I'm awfully glad of it. One o'clock's quite late enough to be out. People only get drunk after that time."

"By Jove! I didn't know you were a moralist."

"Then there's corn in Egypt where you didn't expect to find it."

"That there is. You approve of preventive legislation?"

"I shall approve of your reading that letter, while I draw this cork."

"Allow me."

"No; I can do it. Champagne always pops."

"Except when it's sillery."

"And if it didn't," she continued, "I've a patent corkscrew."

Wormald began to read the letter, and as he progressed his face wore an interested expression, and a mischievous twinkle appeared in his eyes.

"You're a long time over that bit of scribble," she exclaimed.

"Are you sure it's for you?" he replied.

"My name's Fanny Carruthers, isn't it?"

"Really you must excuse me, not having been present at the ceremony at the baptismal font—which the garrulous vulgar say that the irreverent Spurgeon denominates the ecclesiastical spittoon of the stiff-necked Establishment."

"Oh, shut up! what's the name on the envelope?"

"Fanny Carruthers."

"All right, then; what's the row with the letter?"

"It's from a felonious progenitor in trouble to an unfilial child of his old age."

"What!" cried Fanny, putting the bottle and glass on the table, and snatching the note out of his hand.

"He signs himself Stoffles," said Wormald.

"What does it matter to you what he signs himself?" cried Fanny angrily.

"Nothing much; only I collect the autographs of great people, and am at this moment open to an offer respecting a William Sykes."

"It must be a mistake," said Fanny.

"So I should think."

"There is another woman in the street whom Carruthers used to keep; but I don't know whether her name's Fanny."

"Another! what an old Turk!" remarked Wormald.

"It must be meant for her."

"Of course."

"I shall seal it up again, and give it to the servant to return to the postman."

"It will be a dead letter."

"Oh, no ; they are sure to find the woman out."

Fanny was ashamed of her father, and had been ashamed of him for years ; but she was unutterably ashamed of him now that he was the inmate of a gaol. It was the last ounce on the back of the camel. Perhaps Dick Stoffles might have had his share of shame respecting his daughter ; but that young lady, in her own opinion, was immeasurably superior to her father, and never thought of her paternity without a blush.

"I wish people would not go sending their letters wrong. It's a great bore," she exclaimed.

Wormald was evidently in a mischievous humour that day, for he replied, "It isn't that so much as the monstrosity of the fellow calling himself Stoffles. Fancy being Miss Stoffles ! what a let-down, eh ?"

"Yes," replied Fanny very dryly.

"Would it not be splendid chaff for those who knew her ?"

"Ye-es," still more dryly.

"Stoffles is something like Skittles."

"Some-thing."

"'There goes Stoffles !' a man might exclaim. But excuse me, your glass is empty. What are you drinking, champagne ? Capital wine this."

"Yes ; it is very good. My father is a wine-merchant, you know."

"Is he really ?"

"And I patronise him."

"By Jove! that's very fine."

"I should think he makes two or three hundred a year out of me."

"Quite a pull for him."

"Oh, he doesn't care about it; he is not a man in a tin-pot way of business."

"I wonder if he suspects any thiug," thought Fanny Carruthers. "He looks a shrewd fellow, but I think I've thrown him off the scent. The idea of having a father in Newgate! I must keep that dark, any how; but it serves me right, it's all my fault for shying my letters over to fellows to read. He may be clever, but I'll back myself against him."

"That's a strange thing," said Wormald to himself almost at the same time. "I have found out that her name is Stoffles, and that her father has been making a mistake between what's his and what isn't, and has been tripped up in cousequence. She's an artful little beggar, too, to try and throw dust in my eyes, by saying the letter was for another woman, and that her father was a wine-merchant."

"When is this horse of yours coming?" exclaimed Fanny impatiently.

"It ought to be here now."

A ring was heard at the street-door. Fanny rushed to the window, and said, "There are some horses outside: is it one of them?"

Wormald joined her, and replied, "Yes, the bay. Put your skirt on, and come for a ride."

"All right. I won't be a moment," replied Fanny, running away.

CHAPTER XVI.

WORMALD BECOMES INTERESTING.

A RIDE through Roehampton, Richmond, and Twickenham is a very agreeable affair. For some part of the way the road is agreeably wooded. Fanny enjoyed herself immensely, and declared that the horse Wormald had placed at her service was the finest animal she had ever backed. She forgot all about Dick Stoffles. What was it to her that her father was languishing in a prison? She was free—a bird cannot fly with one wing, but she had both pinions unclipped; no *atra cura* rode behind her. She made up her mind to enjoy herself, and she did. Wormald rode a handsome cob, rising fifteen hands.

They were passing Kew, and as the mushroom-looking Pagoda towering above the trees caught Fanny's eye, she exclaimed, "What is that place?"

"Kew Gardens."

"Oh, I've heard of Kew. What sort of a place is it?"

"Very pretty, indeed."

"Do people go there?"

"Sometimes; when it isn't overrun with cads and common people. Do you like the lower orders?"

"Do I? What a question to ask me! I positively detest them. If I had my way, I would put them all in some powder-mill and blow them up."

"You had better do it at once."

"Why? is there any particular hurry?"

"We shall give them the ballot and the suffrage some day, and then they will be too powerful."

"Ah! now you are talking politics. You are too deep for me. Is this Richmond?"

"I believe so. The streets are narrow and dirty just here, and I believe that is a peculiarity of an approach from this side. Will you stop somewhere and dine?"

"I don't care about dining in my habit. I should like some soup and something cold, if one can get it *al fresco*."

"It would be nice to do as an old traveller does at Wolverton."

"What is that?"

"He wants some soup. The soup is hot, and the train does not stay long enough for the soup to cool; so the traveller pays an extra sixpence for the soup-plate, and devours his soup at his ease as he rattles along to Rugby."

"But how about the spoon?" said Fanny, laughing.

"Oh, that he has in his travelling-bag. It is part of his travelling *ménage*. That is rough and ready, is it not?"

"Very much so; like a flunkey who has inherited a fortune going to Moses and Son to be equipped at a moment's notice."

"I should have thought a flunkey would have had more aristocratic ideas."

"What is born in the bone—"

"Ah! If you are proverbial, I shall think of Tupper, and hold my peace."

They rode into the courtyard of a quiet, old-fashioned-looking inn at Richmond, and had a cold luncheon ; after which, they pursued their journey. There happened to be a *fête* at the residence of some French royalist of distinction, when a French gentleman of distinction had married a French lady equally distinguished. The *fête* was also one of distinction ; but as it was the third or fourth day of the Gallic festivities, the grounds were thrown open to the British public—pageant-loving British public !—at the small charge of five shillings. Being seized of that sum, as they say in Westminster Hall, Fanny and Mr. Wormald resolved to walk their horses through the spacious park. The strains of distant music were borne faintly on the breeze, and the sounds of merriment floated gaily towards them. Leaving the beaten track, they rode under some trees, where they were well sheltered from the heat of the sun. Fanny remarked that Wormald looked admiringly at her ; and she prided herself upon having tamed “this wild-beast,” as she had termed him at first. And he was congratulating himself upon the fact, that she was not quite so much of a tigress as he had formerly imagined her.

“I like the shade,” he said.

“So do I.”

“Nice place to smoke in.”

“Why don’t you smoke, then?”

“I think I shall presently. I wonder if any one has ever made love here?”

“What a funny question !”

“Is it ? Why is it ?”

"Because it is."

This highly edifying conversation here languished; and they walked their horses over the greensward in silence, until Wormald said:

"I should like to know how people make love. It is a thing I never did in my life."

"It is a very common thing," replied Fanny, paying great attention to her horse and the ground he was treading on. "The way in which love is made all depends upon the character of the people who make it. I once heard of two people who were fond of one another, and who took a stroll one evening in the City. A day or two afterwards, the man wrote to the object of his affections, that he should never forget that walk along the Mile-End Road."

"Will you laugh at me if I say, that I wish something would happen which would so endear this scene to me that I could never forget it?"

"Yes; for you are the last man I should expect to be sentimental."

"I have a tender place in my heart," he said; "and in it I have shrined your likeness."

"Look here, old fellow," said Fanny suddenly.

"Well?"

"Just leave off talking nonsense; or, if you must talk it, talk as if you were a jolly fellow, and not as if you were reading from a book."

A smile, half of disappointment, half of amusement, passed over his countenance; and he said, after a slight pause:

"Do you want me to 'patter flash,' like a gipsy?"

"No ; I only want you to be natural."

"Very well. I was thinking that you were not half bad-looking."

"That's better."

"And I was wishing that you'd cut that fellow Carruthers, and—"

"Take up with you, I suppose?" she interrupted.

"Exactly."

"Not such a fool, my boy. Don't know enough of you. I'm all right as I am ; and I don't see the fun of quarrelling with my bread-and-butter."

"Nobody wants you to. I can butter your bread as thick, and a good deal thicker than he can."

"I'm not sure of that. What's the good of taking a jump in the dark?"

"Wait till the moon rises."

"No ; I'd rather jump in broad daylight. Gold's better than silver any day in the week, Sundays included."

"What's Carruthers worth to you?"

"His name's worth something."

"And as for me?" he said interrogatively.

"You may be a Greek or a Jew for what I know."

"A Greek if you like, but not a Jew."

"Why not? One's as good as the other."

"And a great deal better," he replied.

The avenue of trees which had hitherto protected them from the heat now came to an end, and they burst out into a full blaze of burning sunshine. A large expanse of open meadow-land, neatly but not thickly wooded, lay before them ; and they re-

marked several people going along the road on foot, on horseback, and in carriages.

A man on foot approached Wormald, and exclaimed, "How do you do?" and lifted his hat to Fanny. He was a man about thirty; neatly dressed, and wearing an important air. He was "under Government," and was a man with a peculiarity;—he had a distressing way of seeing likenesses. You could not be in his society for more than five minutes before he would make you fully aware of his infirmity. He would "see a likeness" in a passing sweep to Runjeet Singh or Abdel Kader.

"Glad to see you," replied Wormald. "Mr. Joyce—Mrs. Carruthers. Been to the *fête*?"

"Why, yes. Lost all my money. To tell you the truth, there was a woman at one of the stalls at the fancy fair so awfully like the Princess Mary, that I couldn't help looking at her."

"Really! Come back again with us, and we can all dine together somewhere."

"Will you make me a pillion?"

"What do you want a pillion for? A young fellow like you ought to walk."

"I say, Wormald," suddenly interrupted Joyce, "do you see that old fellow in that carriage?"

"Yes. What of him?"

"I could have sworn he was the member for Manchester."

Mr. Joyce was not in the remotest way acquainted with the member for Manchester, or any one else it was his fancy to name. It was simply one of his awful base and bare-faced fictions.

"He's great fun," said Wormald to Fanny, aside. "He'll amuse you very much with his likenesses. He's beastly funny sometimes."

"I don't mind if I do walk a little way with you," exclaimed Joyce, "if it's only for the sake of seeing that woman who's so like Mary Cambridge."

"Are there many people about?"

"Oh, yes; a great quantity. Marie Amélie is very bland and fascinating. Sold me a charm just now: a trumpery Palais Royal affair. Gave her five bob for it."

"You had better give it to me, Mr. Joyce; I am fond of charms," exclaimed Fanny.

"Oh, certainly; with pleasure," he replied, feeling in his pocket.

The exclamation about the charm was purely fictional, so that he searched, very naturally, without success. Five shillings, to a man of Mr. Joyce's limited income, being a matter of importance, and worth looking twice at before being parted with, it followed that he had a reluctance to let it go out of his possession unless he got value received for it.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "How absurd! I must have lost it. I'm really very sorry; but I'll get you another when we are at the place."

"Don't trouble," replied Fanny; "it is of no consequence."

"Excuse me," he exclaimed; "but I never saw such a likeness."

"In me?"

"Yes."

"To whom?"

"Adelina Patti. It's really marvellous. Same hair, eyes, nose, mouth, ears. By Jove! cast in the same mould."

Fanny laughed; and they continued to converse on commonplace topics until they reached the grounds of the house in which the fancy fair was being held. It was a gay scene. The sky was serene and cloudless; the weather lovely, although the thermometer was upwards of seventy in the shade. Numbers of well-dressed people were moving to and fro in that stately manner peculiar to the British people when at a *fête*.

"What an absurd resemblance! Positively ridiculous," exclaimed Joyce, as they walked through the throng. "It's the image of Tom Sayers: there's the nose, and all."

"It is a pity you are not an artist," said Wormald. "If you were, what a portrait gallery you would be able to make!"

"Yes, I should. I say, is that the Lord Mayor? No; it's Richard Cobden. Is it, though? No, it's not; it's the Argyle Rooms man,—what's his name? —Bicknell, or else it is his ghost. What a likeness! I never saw such a thing."

All at once Fanny turned pale, and nervously pressing Wormald's arm, said, in an undertone:

"Get away from here. Make haste; I don't care where you go."

"Better go to where we left our horses," he replied, wondering what could be the reason of her sudden request.

"Never mind now. It's too late," she exclaimed.

"Who is it?"

"Carruthers," she replied, under her breath.

Carruthers was by himself, and seemed rather bored than amused. He caught sight of Fanny almost as soon as she saw him, and pressed towards her. He was surprised at seeing her with a man; and said, as soon as he reached her, in a tone of subdued anger:

"Who's your friend?"

"My brother," she replied, with an air of easy self-possession. "Will you be introduced?"

He growled an affirmative.

Wormald was now standing close to Carruthers, for Fanny had relinquished his arm. A smile full of meaning flitted around the corners of Carruthers' mouth.

"Since when have you been this lady's brother?" he exclaimed.

"Precisely as long as the relationship is agreeable to her."

Turning to Fanny, Carruthers said:

"I expected something of this sort. I know that fellow."

"Well, what of it?"

"I can't tell you his name; but I've seen him for years mooning about the Burlington and the Park and places."

"Suppose you have?"

"If you prefer him to me, you had better stick to him. I don't see the pull of keeping women for—"

"You'd better not provoke me," said Fanny

warningly. "You know, or you ought to know, by this time, that I am not too good-tempered ; and it wouldn't take me long to give you a hiding here."

"Fortunately, there are police on the ground to protect me from your violence."

"Are there? I'd serve them the same," she replied, turning red in the face with rising anger.

He was pale with apprehension. Wormald alone was amused, and calm as a statue.

"Just take that by way of a commencement," exclaimed Fanny, knocking his hat off.

He stooped down and picked it up, but said nothing, neither by way of expostulation or retort.

"Have you had enough?" she continued, "or shall I go on? Why don't you call the police? There they are. Am I to remain shut up at home while you go about every where and enjoy yourself? What were you doing here?"

"Nothing."

"Oh, that's nonsense."

"I merely looked in here for an hour on my way to join you in town," he replied sullenly.

"That's all very well for a chicken, but I'm an old stager," she said, with an incredulous look. "You were looking for some chance, weren't you?"

"If you're tired of me, I am of you," he replied.

"I shall cut you when it suits me, my dear fellow. I wish you were still in the army, for if you behaved in an ungentlemanly manner to me, I could write to the colonel of your regiment, and get you kicked out."

"You couldn't do it."

"Oh, yes, I could. You'd better not provoke me."

"I've heard of your little games before," remarked Carruthers; "and you're naturally riled at being bowled out."

"Of course I am; that's just it."

After saying this, her passion seemed to take so strong a hold of her that she lost all control over herself, and with a hysterical sob she flew at Carruthers and seized him by the collar, tearing it from his neck, and pulling his coat open with such violence as to cause all the buttons to fall to the ground. She next attacked his shirt, and did not leave him till he was a perfect wreck.

"You'll cheek me again, will you?" she cried. "That will teach you to be a little more civil to women. I'm not going to be insulted and trampled upon by you, if I'm not a lady."

Wormald happily saw some policemen approaching the scene of action, attracted no doubt by the crowd which had collected around the combatants. Grasping Fanny by the shoulder, he exclaimed—"Come along; you have given the poor beggar quite enough."

"Oh, no, I haven't," she replied resolutely.

"Believe me, you have. If you come away now, you will get into no shindy. The police are coming."

"Let them come."

"He will give you into custody."

"He's not such a fool," she answered; "they could only fine me. I'd get lots of bails, and in less than

a couple of hours I'd find him out. I'd pull him out of his hotel."

"You shall listen to reason," exclaimed Wormald determinedly.

He grasped her arm tighter, and dragged her by main force towards the spot where their horses were standing. She struggled violently at first; but afterwards yielded to his superior judgment, and ceased resistance. They were soon on horseback, and putting their horses' heads down the road, galloped off at a good round pace. Remembering Lot's wife, Fanny never once looked behind her; but Wormald took a hurried look, and saw Carruthers standing in the midst of an inquisitive crowd, who seemed in doubt whether to criminate or condemn him.

The dust flew up in clouds beneath the hoofs of their horses, and they were not at all sorry to stop and walk along the green and yielding grass by the side of the roadway. Fanny seemed to have perfectly recovered herself. She was a little flushed, and that was all.

"I'll bet you think me a pretty blackguard?" she said, addressing Wormald.

"Not at all. I am not disappointed."

"Don't you cheek me too," she said, in doubt as to his meaning.

"I have no intention of doing so."

"Tell me what you mean?"

"I am not disappointed because I formed no extravagant estimate. I never took you for a lady—I never supposed you to be a lady; and I think you acted with considerable spirit."

"Thanks for that," she replied ; "you are a sensible fellow. There are very few men who would have spoken to me so frankly ; but I like you for it. Now, suppose I had treated you as I treated Carruthers ?"

"I don't think you would have done so, because I would not have laid myself open to it."

"But suppose ?"

"Very well, let us put a supposititious case. If you had treated me as you just now did Carruthers, I could only do one thing."

"What is that ?" she asked, with some curiosity depicted on her countenance.

"Take devilish good care it shouldn't happen again."

"You mean, you'd cut me ?"

"Certainly."

"But suppose, again, that you loved me : would it have the effect of extinguishing your love ?"

"I think it would ; because, in making me look a fool, you attack my vanity ; and any assault on one's self-esteem is generally fatal to love."

"Carruthers, of course, will never speak to me again ?"

"You know the man better than I do."

"He could forgive my knocking him about, and smashing him up as I did, but he will not forgive me for being with you."

"Nor would he be a gentleman if he did," replied Wormald. "It is just one of those things a man cannot pass over, without sinking to a level which is too degrading to think of."

"Oh! I don't want him," said Fanny independently. "There are lots of fellows about quite as good as he is; and with my experience, I ought to get on very well."

"So you will."

"Do you want to keep a woman?" she exclaimed. "Because if you do, there is a good chance for you."

"I am keeping two already," was the quiet reply.

"What!" cried Fanny, looking at him as if he had been the Grand Turk himself, while her eyes dilated with unfeigned astonishment.

Was it possible that so quiet a fellow as Wormald—so demure—so apparently indifferent to the charm of women—could have two under his protection? After that declaration he rose considerably in Fanny's estimation, but she rather fought shy of him.

"Does that frighten you?" he asked.

"I must confess it does."

"Why?"

"I am afraid you know too much for me. I like boys. You can twist them round your fingers, and if they have never had an affair of the heart before, you always have a hold on their affections."

"You prefer thistle-down to a full-grown beard?"

"Very much. I have the Yelverton and the Longworth before my eyes."

"Rather an instructive history."

"Poor Theresa! but I must not forget my own troubles in thinking of hers. Who are your women?"

"Nobodies."

"Any one I am likely to know?"

"They might know *you* probably. You have heard of Baby Clarence?"

"Yes. Do they know *her*?"

"One of them is the Baby."

"You won't find it easy to cut her," said Fanny, regarding him with still greater astonishment.

"Oh! yes; a man can always get rid of a woman if he wishes."

"And will you give her up and the other for me?"

"If you think you could be happy with me."

"What would you do with me?"

"Nothing very dreadful," he replied, with a smile.

When Fanny reached her house, she was rather tired with the long ride she had had, and a little worn out with the excitement she had passed through. Wormald would not go in, but promised to see her again soon. He was charmed to hear that she liked the horse he had bought her, and trusted she would not allow it to remain idle in the stable. She laughingly replied that there was little chance of that. She did not altogether blame her violent temper for her rupture with Carruthers; that rupture, she felt assured, would have happened, whether or no owing to her showing herself in public places with a man. She did not care for Carruthers any more than she cared for Wormald. Her affections were disinterested. The love was on their side, and not on hers. All she wished to do was to enjoy herself. Her nature was not sordid. She did not want to get money from them for the purpose of saving it. She had no intention of making a market out of them,

for the future never entered her calculations ; and she always hoped she might die in the spring-tide of life, regretted by all who knew her. In this respect she resembled Milly, the unfortunate victim of Gentleman Barton's ill treatment.

In Fanny's opinion, Carruthers was a very nice fellow ; but in the absence of Carruthers, Wormald would do as well. The latter appeared to be very well off, which was an additional recommendation in his favour.

CHAPTER XVII.

INGARWICK.

SOME time after the episode at the fancy fair, Annie May went into her friend Fanny's bedroom and saw her packing up some of her wearing apparel ; a particular dress caught her eye, and she said, " Why Fanny, I thought you'd spouted that dress ! "

" Did you ? " was the reply.

" I'm sure you did. "

" Perhaps I've got it out. "

" Oh ! " exclaimed the simple-minded Annie, as a new light broke upon her.

" Are you satisfied now ? "

" Not quite. "

" What else do you want to know ? "

" What are you getting your things out for ? "

" Because I want them, I suppose. "

" What for, Fanny ? "

" To pack them up. "

"Are you going away?"

"Yes."

"Where to?"

"Into the country."

"Nonsense, Fanny!"

"I am, though."

"Who with, Carruthers?"

"No, another fellow—I've cut Carruthers."

She did not say, "Carruthers has cut me."

"What do you want to go into the country for?"

"Oh, how you do ask questions!" said Fanny impatiently.

"Ask questions!" repeated Annie, with a vacant stare; "well, where's the harm of asking questions? that's just like you, Fanny, always snapping people up."

"People shouldn't be foolish, then."

"Well, I'm sure, I wish I hadn't come into your room, now," said Annie, with an air of injured innocence.

"So do I," was the calm reply.

"Who are you going with, Fanny—tell me, will you?"

"You'll find out on Sunday."

"Is it a secret?"

"Not that I know of."

"Let me hear it?"

"All right. Wormald."

"Wormald!" repeated Annie, with an angry intonation.

"Yes; is there any thing wonderful in it?"

"Why, he's my man."

"Is he? I think he's mine now."

"That's just what women say of you, Fanny," exclaimed her friend, much aggrieved; "you'll take any body's man away."

"Do they say so?"

"Yes, many of them."

"Well, they won't tell lies, for once in their lives."

"Where is he going to take you?"

"I don't know—some quiet spot, I believe; but I sha'n't find out till I get there."

"Won't you miss town, Fanny?"

"I think not."

"Oh, I should. Fancy going away to a quiet place! It's like burying yourself alive."

"I'm tired of London," said Fanny; "I shall go abroad after a bit."

"I shouldn't mind *that*," replied Annie.

"Oh, so I've said something that pleases you at last! Ring the bell for Rose, will you?"

Annie agitated the bell-rope, and said, "What do you want Rose for?"

"God bless my soul, Annie!" said Fanny; "you're as bad as a child, and worse than a parrot. Do try and be a little less silly."

"That's always the way with you, Fanny; one mustn't speak."

"Better hold your tongue, if you must talk nonsense. Here, pack up these petticoats and things for me."

When Rose arrived, Fanny despatched her for

some spirit or other ; as she said, "Packing was dry work."

Annie was sorry to lose her friend, for they had lived in the same house for some time ; but Fanny comforted her with the assurance that she should come and see her some day, and stay a week or two : "Which, you know, will be a change for you, and do you good, dear," she said.

The place that Frank Wormald had selected for Fanny—no longer Carruthers—was situated on the banks of the Thames, above Reading. It was only a small village, to which people fond of fishing occasionally resorted for the indulgence of their favourite pastime. There were not above forty or fifty houses in the hamlet. Two taverns, a church, and a Dissenting chapel constituted what may be called the public buildings of Ingarwick. Wormald had selected a semi-detached cottage, built by an enterprising retired tradesman, who inhabited the other half of the house ; for if the two cottages had been thrown into one, they would only have sufficed to make one habitation of a decent size. He furnished the house neatly and comfortably, and supplied Fanny with a small basket-carriage and pony, for which he built a stable. At first Fanny was in raptures with her new dwelling, and declared that it was the most charming abode she had ever lived in in her life ; but as the days multiplied themselves, and the weeks dragged along, she began to predicate that it would be "very cold in winter," and she thought it was rather "too near the river." But as Wormald was a wise man, and one of some experience, he knew that to

suppose it possible to please a woman for any length of time would only be to indulge a fallacy of such colossal proportions as to bring the person so indulging it within an ace of idiotism. "If it is cold in winter, dear," he replied, "I hope and trust sincerely that coals will not rise to such a price as to become impossible luxuries."

"No, I don't suppose they will; but I'm sure, yesterday, after the rain, the wind tore round that corner so keenly as almost to bite one's nose off."

"We must pray for it to be merciful, for a woman without a nose would be contrary to the laws of nature, and consequently an abomination."

"Then there's the river."

"Well, what of it?"

"Why, there are floods, sometimes."

"Are there? I never heard of them. Perhaps you are thinking of Egypt and the Nile," remarked Wormald calmly.

"What makes you chaff me like that, Frank?" she asked, a little put out.

"I'm very sorry if I annoyed you."

"That's what you always say."

"Shall I take you on the river? would you like a row?"

"No, I don't like any thing," she replied pettishly.

"Put on your hat, dear; I'll wait for you outside," he said, lighting a cigar.

"I wish women could smoke, Frank," she said; "I don't think I should be so miserable if I could smoke."

"So they do."

"What sort of women?"

"Irish women who keep apple-stalls, and respectable fish-fags."

Fanny left the room without making any reply and returned in a short time, dressed. They sauntered down a lane together, and neared the water's side. Wormald had a double-barrelled fowling-piece with him. "What have you brought your gun for?" she asked.

"I thought I might see a moor-hen."

"Are you going in a punt?"

"Not without you wish it. I proposed to scull you up to the weir in a gig."

"I should like that best."

They embarked in a well-built boat, which Wormald had brought down from London with him, seven-and-twenty feet long, and for which Searle of Stangate had charged him one-and-twenty shillings a foot. His monogram was painted inside a garter within the bows, and his crest was emblazoned on the blades of the oars. Little fenders hung down outside to preserve the varnish from being scratched, and some handsome cushions made a very comfortable seat for Fauny, upon whom the important duty of steering devolved. The Thames is in almost every part of its tortuous course studded with eyots or islands, which rise out of its bed in the most eccentric manner. There were several near Ingarwick; and Fanny often used to amuse herself by making Wormald row into the willows and reeds which fringed their banks, so that she might gather a few

bulrushes, the soft velvety tops of which seemed very pretty to her, and afforded her great pleasure. She was collecting them for the purpose of fastening them skilfully together, and making a screen.

The man who had charge of the boat, by Wormald's desire, obtained some bottled beer and various other accessories of an aquatic trip, which he put in the stern, and they embarked—Frank sculling steadily, and pulling up against the stream ; Fanny holding the rudder lines with a grace all her own. Wormald did not exert himself severely ; he talked to Fanny with his usual cheerfulness, and at length they reached the weir. The water tore through the piles, and lashed itself into foam, until it looked like a small Niagara. At each lock in the Thames there is a fall of eight feet ; and the cascade at Ingarwick weir was not devoid of its picturesque beauty, which invariably captivated Fanny whenever she saw it.

"This is pretty, is it not ?" said Frank, resting on his oars.

"Very pretty ! It is the only really enjoyable thing about Ingarwick."

The roar of the falling water made conversation difficult, and Wormald allowed the boat to drift down until they were alongside one of the eyots.

"Stop here a little while," she exclaimed.

"Let her drift," he replied ; "it will be more agreeable."

"Very well. I say, Frank, what made you bring me to such a quiet place as Ingarwick ?"

"I can't tell exactly. I lived near here when I was a boy, and I thought you might like it."

"Do you love me?"

"Why do you ask? You know I do."

"Not well enough to marry me, though?"

He made no reply.

"Why don't you answer me?"

"You make an assertion, my darling, which is so self-evident as to require no answer," he replied carelessly.

"That is a very affectionate way to talk to me, certainly."

"Why, then, do you commence disagreeable conversations?"

"Have I done any harm?"

"No."

"Then why do you look so fiercely at me?"

"I was not aware that I was guilty of so serious a misdemeanour."

"You are not the sort of man that a woman can really love in her heart."

"Do you think not?"

"I am sure of it."

"My experience proves the contrary. I *have* been loved by more than one woman."

"There is no accounting for taste," remarked Fanny, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Perhaps not for yours, which may be eccentric."

"But why not marry me? You like living quietly with me, and there *are* times when you *profess* a great deal of affection for me?"

"Why should you wish *me* to marry you more than any one else?" he asked.

"You are good enough."

"Thanks for your condescension."

"I should have preferred a profession."

"You have had one plenty of times within your grasp!"

"Yes; but I did not like the men."

"What is the set-off against the want of a profession?"

"What do you think?"

"My money?"

"Exactly."

"Do you love *me*?"

"Sometimes."

"'Pon my word, that is candid."

"Oh! I always am."

"When are the happy moments in which you love me?"

"I love you in this way: love in you creates love in me. When you are kind to me, I love you."

"I suppose I should be *very* kind if I were to marry you?"

"Yes."

"And you would, in consequence, love me more than usual?"

She did not perceive the sarcasm of the speech, and replied again in the affirmative.

"How unfortunate it is that I am not a marrying man!" he exclaimed, looking down at the rippling water.

"Oh, nonsense, Frank! What is to prevent your marrying me?"

"Many serious considerations."

"Such as—"

"Such as—well, perhaps you would not care about hearing them."

"Oh, yes, I should. Are you afraid of your friends?"

"They would not be over-joyed at the connection."

"I am as good as they are!"

"Perhaps a good deal better."

"Now, don't chaff me," she cried angrily.

He pulled away at his cigar with quiet equanimity.

"My friends are not manufacturers."

She had discovered that Wormald's relations had been, or were, cotton-spinners in Lancashire; and she made use of the information in her own peculiarly ingenious manner.

"Very happy to hear it," he said.

"I don't belong to a lot of cotton-spinners!"

"Gratifying information, I'm sure!" he replied quietly.

"You can't call yourself a gentleman, you know."

"Perhaps not. But you will admit that I am slightly elevated above the bargee in the social scale?"

"You may have mixed with gentlemen, and so picked up gentlemanly behaviour, and that; but, in my opinion, a gentleman ought to be born and bred one."

"The editor of *Notes and Queries* ought to be informed of the circumstance."

Fanny was about to make some angry reply, but

her articulation was impeded by a sudden shock. Hoarse voices at the same time sounded in her ears, and the next moment she felt herself in the water, whilst she was conscious of some huge, dark thing sweeping past her, and trying to drag her within its vortex.

They had been so rapt in their conversation as not to notice the approach of a barge laden with timber, piled up high above the deck. Frank Wormald, from his position, could not have seen it. As Fanny was steering, it was her duty to look ahead, but she had neglected to do so. Those on the barge were equally negligent. The man at the helm did not see the little boat until the barge was upon it, and bearing it down. It came in contact with the barge with a severe concussion; the bows were staved in, and the boat rapidly filled with water. Frank was an accomplished swimmer, and soon rose to the surface. His first care was to look for Fanny. He saw her a little below him, and instantly struck out to her rescue. He reached her, and grasping her by the arm, swam with her to the shore. She was partially insensible. He laid her on the bank, and looked round him for the remains of his boat, which were floating down the river. The bargees, fearful of being cast in an action for damages, increased the speed of their horses, and endeavoured to get out of sight.

Wormald fumed with impatience; for he could not leave Fauny, and he longed to punish the barge-men for their carelessness and heartless conduct in pursuing their way, instead of stopping to see if

they could render any assistance to a lady who, they must have known, was in some way injured.

"Are you much hurt, Fanny dearest?" exclaimed Wormald, giving her a slight shake.

She opened her eyes. He repeated his question.

"No; not much hurt, dear," she replied: "more frightened, I think; though I feel a pain in my forehead."

"Are you well enough to wait here by yourself for a short time?"

"By myself! What for?"

"I want to go after those rascally barge fellows. I shall not be long."

"Very well, dear Frank, I will stay here till your return," she answered in a faint voice.

Overjoyed at her consent, Wormald darted off, notwithstanding his wet and dripping apparel, with the speed of an arrow. The clanking of the chains of the barge-horses could just be heard in the distance. He speedily overtook them. When the man who was driving them perceived that he was followed, he urged his cattle to increased exertion; but not being accustomed to such severe efforts, they did not respond to the call. Wormald came up with them, panting.

"Stop!" he shouted to the man.

Those on board the barge told him to go on, and he endeavoured to obey their directions.

"Will you stop, or must I make you?" cried Wormald, seizing the foremost horse by the bridle.

"Lee-ave goa!" exclaimed the man.

"I certainly shall not."

"Then oi'll roide o'er thee!"

"Will you, my friend? We'll see about that!" replied Wormald, turning the horses' heads, and making them front down stream. This manœuvre stopped the progress of the barge, and presently a jerk was felt that nearly dragged the hindmost horse into the river. Owing to this jerk, the barge threatened to run into the shore; but the men on board of her, two in number, produced long poles, and kept her out, shouting to their companion meanwhile to go on. Finding that unless Wormald was removed by main force he would be unable to do so, he alighted from his horse, with a volley of imprecations and curses such as those who frequent Marlow Bridge delight in, and advanced threateningly to Wormald, who stood his ground without flinching.

"Let goa of t' 'orse's yed!" he cried.

"Not if I know it, my man."

"Can 'ee foight?"

"You can try, if you like."

"Then moind theesel'."

"You're not the first bargee I've fought and leathered, my friend!" exclaimed Wormald; "and I think I can tackle you—any how, I'll try."

The bargee came on in a lumbering fashion, something like an old-fashioned plough when compared with a steam instrument of the same nature.

His friends on the barge backed him up vociferously, saying:

"Let him have it, Bill, lad. Gi'e it to him. Clump him, Bill, lad!"

But Bill found it easier to listen to their advice than to follow it. He let out with his right in an unscientific manner, and his blow, had it taken effect, was powerful enough to fell an ox; but Wormald, who stood well on his toes, stepped back and retaliated with his left, which took effect on the man's mouth. His teeth rattled like castinets, and a ring Wormald wore on his finger cut the fellow's lip in half, the blood flowing therefrom in a stream, much to the man's disgust. He now became furious, and hit out at random. Wormald had little difficulty in parrying every blow, and whenever he saw a chance of punishing him safely (which was often enough) he did not hesitate to do so. In five minutes the bargee was lying on his back, his Herculean frame convulsed with pain, his eyes closed, his teeth loose, his lip cut, his nose flattened, and breathing heavily, like a big fish out of his element.

Taking a knife from his pocket, Wormald cut the towing-rope which connected the horses with the barge, and applying one end of it to their backs with considerable force, sent them tramping along the towing-path up the river. The bargemen afterwards found them waiting at the next lock, a distance of two miles and a half, which was a very pleasant little trip for them, while they left the barge in charge of the wounded man; and all the more pleasant and agreeable, because time is of value to a bargee as well as to less favoured mortals.

"Now, you fellows," cried Wormald, turning his attention to the men on board, "tell me the name of your vessel and her owner."

"Sha'n't do nowt o' the kind," replied a brawny round-shouldered Berkshire man.

"Oh, you won't? I have brought one of your friends to reason, and I'll do the same with you."

"You can't get at us, my toolip!" replied the man.

"I don't know about that."

"You'll ha' to soom for it."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of that."

"We're ready for you!" said the man, thinking Wormald would never venture to swim out to him.

"Once for all, will you answer my questions?"

"No; we wunnot."

Wormald waded into the stream, and then struck out for the barge, which was hut a few feet distant from the shallow water. The men appeared paralysed at his audacity. He laid hold of the tiller, raised himself up, and boarded the barge without any difficulty, and without any attempt on the part of the men to drive him back. They stood biting their lips on the poop or quarter-deck of the barge, at the entrance to their little cabin. "What barge is this?" cried Wormald, raising his fist in a threatening manner.

"The Princess Alexandra," replied the man, civilly enough now.

"Where from?"

He mentioned the name of a town below bridge to which she belonged.

"Owner's name?"

"Jackson."

"Very well; if you had spoken out before, you

would have saved me a great deal of trouble. How is it you don't keep a better look-out?"

"Too much cargo, sir."

"Oh, that's it, eh? Well, it is a dangerous custom to overload barges."

"That's not our fault."

"No; I do not mean to say that it is."

"Hope you'll look over it, sir."

"I will this time, more especially as I am partly to blame; but it would have been better for you had you hove-to at once, and rendered what assistance you could to the lady who was with me; for what you know, she might have been very much hurt."

"That's true, sir," replied the man, looking very crest-fallen and sheepish; "but we're rough fellows, and don't think of ladies."

"I hope this will be a lesson to you, my good man. I might have given you a sovereign for your trouble; as it is, your companion gets a hiding, and you get nothing."

Making a note in his mind of the name of the barge, its port, and its owner, Wormald made his way to the shore, and leaving the bargees endeavouring to console themselves as best they could, hastened back to the spot where he had left Fanny.

He found her very weak; but she rose with his assistance, and smiled as she heard his account of his encounter with the bargemen, whom she was very glad to hear he had treated as they deserved. They were obliged to walk back to Ingarwick, as their boat was utterly useless, and had already preceded

them a considerable distance down the stream. When Fanny reached home, she at once went to bed, and was so ill, that for some days she could not get up. Her nervous system was shocked. Frank did all he could for her, and she was very grateful for his solicitude.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW TO GET MARRIED.

A WEEK or more after the accident, Fanny was sitting in her garden under an apple-tree, with a book in her hand, but listening to Rose, whom she had brought down from London with her as a companion and lady's-maid, having another servant to do the hard work and to cook.

"You see, mum," Rose was saying, "you're living like a modest woman."

"That's just what I say."

"If you were married, you couldn't be quicter."

"No."

"Nor behave more properer."

"No."

"You have all the worst side of a wife's life, without the satisfaction of being one."

"Exactly."

"And if I were you, mum, I shouldn't see the pull of it."

"No more I do."

"Make him marry you, then!" exclaimed Rose, with a decided toss of the head.

"It's all very well to say 'make' him, but suppose he won't do it?"

"If he would do it all at once, mum, he wouldn't want any making. That's just where it is."

"You can only ask a man to marry you, and badger him if he won't. There's an end of it," said Fanny, much perplexed.

"I think I could tell you how to do it, mum," replied Rose, while her face lightened up with the consciousness of superior intelligence

"Could you?"

"Yes."

"How would you do it?"

"You know Mrs. Mumford?"

"Next door?" said Fanny.

"Yes, mum, the landlady."

"What of her?"

"She's very religious."

"I know she is; and that's why I've fought shy of her."

"A mistake, mum, as I'll show you," replied Rose.

"Go on; I'm listening."

"Mr. Wormald isn't about?"

"No; he's gone to catch a trout for my dinner."

"That's all right. Now, you pay attention to me, and we'll work it between us; I have seen it done before, and I know how to do it."

"What's the first step?"

"You have been ill, and consequently feel rather low-spirited."

"Well?"

"When Mr. Wormald's out, you must run into Mrs. Mumford's."

"Thank you, I'd rather not."

"Oh, but you must; it's part of the plan. She will lend you a lot of pious books—*Sundays at Home*, and Memorials of this, that, and t'other. You needn't read them, but you must take them with you, and lay them where Mr. Wormald's sure to see them."

"What is the use of that?"

"Wait a bit, and you'll have it all as plain as a pin," returned Rose. "He will ask you why you read such trash, and you must tell him that since you have been ill you have been thinking seriously about religious matters."

"He will laugh."

"Oh, no, he won't. You must also say you're going to chapel, and pitch a long tale into him about leading wicked lives, and all that."

"He will most likely get up and walk out of the house."

"Let him. Go at him again when he comes in, and say you cannot live in a state of sin any longer. Do you see?"

"Not quite."

"And if he does not marry you, you must leave him, and all that."

"Oh!" exclaimed Fanny, "I understand. And you think he would marry rather than lose me?"

"I'm sure of it, mum," replied Rose; "but you must do it well, and make him believe you are in earnest."

"Don't be afraid of that; if I begin it, I will carry it through."

"I should commence at once."

"In what way?"

"Pay Mrs. Mumford a visit: she'll be glad enough to see you."

"I think I will. Can I go as I am?"

"Oh, yes, mum; you are dressed quite well enough."

Getting up with a lazy yawn, Fanny walked across the garden to Mrs. Mumford's back-door. She found her nursing one of her children. They exchanged the usual salutations, talked together for some time, and Fanny returned, as Rose had predicted, with half a dozen books of a religious character and denomination.

At one o'clock Frank Wormald came back with a remarkably fine trout, weighing nine or ten pounds, which he had himself caught with a fly up at the weir. He was in high spirits at his success, and drank several glasses of wine whilst the fish was being cooked.

"The fellows down here at this season," he said, "can get three shillings or three shillings and sixpence a pound for trout. It would have been a good haul for them, eh?"

"I should think so," replied Fanny absently.

"I like fly-fishing better than angling with a gentle or a worm, or spinning for jack," he continued. "Do you?"

Fanny looked at him vacantly, as if she had only imperfectly heard his question.

"Do you like fishing?"

"Fishing?" she repeated, as if she did not quite know what fishing was.

"Yes. How dazed you look!"

"Do I?"

"What is the matter with you? I am telling you about the capital sport I have had, and you do not seem to take the least interest in what I am saying"

"I was thinking," she replied meekly—very meekly; at that moment she would have appeared with credit at a christening.

"About what?"

"Oh, a great many things."

"Come over here, Puss, and tell me," he said, in an affectionate tone.

She shook her head mournfully.

"If you prefer staying where you are," he exclaimed, a little annoyed, "pray do so."

No answer.

"I can smoke and read."

He lighted a cigar, took another glass of wine, and accidentally laid hold of one of the religious books Mrs. Mumford had lent her.

"What's this?" he asked. "Been going in for light literature at some circulating library?"

"It is not light reading," she said in a low tone.

"What then?" he replied, holding up the book and looking at her.

"Religious," she ejaculated.

"The devil! What put that in your head?"

"Since I have been ill, I have been a good deal with Mrs. Mumford."

"Who's she? Oh, the landlady; I forgot."

"And she has opened my eyes a little."

"Has she?" he said, much perplexed, and hardly knowing what was coming next.

"You may laugh at me, Frank; but I am miserably unhappy."

"Since when have you been so?"

"Since I have known Mrs. Mumford."

"D— Mrs. Mumford!" exclaimed Wormald.

"Don't say a word against her," said Fanny; "abuse me as much as you like, but let her alone, for she is a most excellent woman."

"So I should think."

"I wish I was half as good."

"One of your sort, eh?"

"No, I am sorry to say," replied Fanny, with a contrite sigh.

Wormald took his cigar from his mouth, and whistled the air of "Get away Black Gal, don't yer come a-nigh me."

"That is just like your profane way of going on, Frank."

"By Jove! it's come to something, if a man can't whistle in his own house," he exclaimed.

"Pray don't leave off on my account."

"I say, Fanny, what the devil's the row with you?"

"Don't use that word, Frank," she asked, accompanying her request with a beseeching look.

"What word?"

"I hardly like to repeat it."

"Do you mean 'devil'?"

"Yes."

"Why not?"

"There is an awful significance about it."

"Awful humbug!"

"Ah! perhaps you will think differently some day," she exclaimed, with a subdued sigh.

"This licks every thing I ever heard," said Wormald. "Why, the other day you would have slanged a fellow within an inch of his life for saying a word to you, and now you're afraid to say 'Bo!' to a goose, because some devil-dodging woman has got hold of you."

Fanny looked inexpressibly shocked.

"Come, Fanny," he continued, "since you've started the subject, let's have it out."

"Have what out?"

"Why, this new-fangled nonsense of yours."

"I have not much to say, Frank," observed Fanny; "nor should I have said the little I have, had you not pressed me to do so; but the truth is, that I want to lead a new life."

"What's to prevent you?"

"Many things. Now, I am living a life of daily, hourly sin."

"What do you mean?"

"I am not your *wife*, Frank!"

"Oh! that's your little game, is it?"

"That remark shows your ignorance of my character," she returned, placidly enough.

"Does it? I don't think so," was the surly answer.

"Were you thoroughly acquainted with my nature, you would be aware that there has always been a silent, hidden current of devotional feeling flowing through my soul."

"Well?"

"This Mrs. Mumford has brought to light."

"Her achievement does her infinite credit."

"I wish you thought so."

Another sigh.

"I should just like to have five minutes quiet conversation with Mrs. Mumford," he cried furiously.

"Nothing would please her better."

"I have my own opinion about that."

"She would turn your heart."

"Not she, by G—"

"It is exactly by His help that she would do it," replied Fanny, turning a casual exclamation to advantage.

"If this is the sort of thing that is to be pitched into me," he exclaimed, "I think I shall take a walk."

"Good by, Frank."

"How 'good by'?"

"I am going away."

"Where to?"

"I hardly know."

"What's the matter now?"

His eyes filled with tears; and approaching her, he took her hand in his, and pressed it warmly.

"We must part, Frank."

"Part!"

"Yes; however bitter such a separation *may be* to me, I must do it. I must! I must! *I must!*"

"Where is the necessity for it?" he asked, turning pale.

"Since I have been converted," she said, very sincerely. "I feel that I cannot—ought not—to live with you in a state of—of—the word is too dreadful to make use of."

"Put it mildly, and call it concubinage," he said, with covert sarcasm.

"If you cannot sympathise with me, you might have the decency to refrain from insulting me."

"Is the truth an insult?"

"It shall not be the truth much longer."

"As you will."

"Oh, I should not care," murmured Fanny, "if I had not loved this man. It is *that* which will kill me."

"Have you really so much affection for me, my pretty one?"

"God knows I have! O Frank! some day you may know how much I love you. But it is my fate. We must part!"

She wrenched her hand away from his, and rang the bell.

Wormald paced the room restlessly, and folded his arms as if in thought.

Fanny had so "worked herself up" during her attempt at *amateur* acting, that her tears were very obedient, and the briny waters flowed at will in large quantities.

No man likes to see a handsome and beautiful woman in tears, and Frank Wormald was put out at the sight.

Rose came into the room.

"Did you ring, ma'am?" she said.

"Br-ring me m-my b-bonnet, R-rose," sobbed Fanny.

"If you please, m'm, excuse me," exclaimed Rose; "but may I make so bold as to ask what is the matter?"

"N-nothing, child

"But—"

"D-do as you are t-told."

"Certainly, m'm," replied Rose, flouncing out of the room with mock indignation at having her creditable attempt to acquire useful knowledge nipped in the bud.

Rose returned with the bonnet and shawl, in which she assisted her mistress to attire herself. Then she went away again, on receiving a sign from Fanny which intimated that she was not wanted.

Fanny made an effort to recover herself, and abandoning her broken voice, as not quite efficacious and telling enough, she spoke plainly and in connected sentences.

"Good by, Frank."

"Are you really in earnest, Fanny?" said Wormald anxiously.

"How can you ask me such a question?"

"I thought—"

"Why should you think? It is not likely that I should joke about serious matters."

"I did not know."

"Do I look like one who has been joking?" she added, raising her tear-laden eyes to his.

"Why, no."

"Give me a kiss, Frank, before I go?"

She looked pleasingly at him, and he thought her ineffably beautiful. Her grief added a new charm to her. He had hitherto seen her gay, laughing, vivacious, mirthful; now she was low-spirited, sorrowful, weeping, broken down.

"One kiss, Frank! my own Frank! Still my own, if thousands of miles intervene between us."

He approached her; their lips met: his were a little dry and parched, hers moist, pouting, inviting.

She seized his hand and squeezed it nervously, so much so that she almost hurt him, as a ring cut into his flesh.

Then she tore herself away, and made towards the door. She was on the threshold: in a minute more she would be gone.

"Fanny!" he cried.

"Well?"

She turned round, and confronted him.

"One moment!"

"No, Frank, not one; do not seek to make me waver in my determination."

"You are not going?"

"I should have been gone, had you not called me back."

"You want me to marry you?" he said.

"I do not want any thing."

"But—"

"I love you, Frank, and I would do much for you; but I cannot jeopardise the welfare of my soul."

"Do not leave me, Fanny !"

"I must."

"Stay with me."

"I cannot."

"What shall I do without you ?"

"I do not know."

"Have some compassion upon me ! You have made yourself necessary to my existence, and I cannot part with you."

"I can only consent to remain with you on the terms I have already mentioned," she said firmly.

Oh, how her heart fluttered in anticipation of the answer he would make her !

"I—" he began, and then he hesitated.

"You will marry me ?"

"I will," he replied in a low voice, almost immediately sinking back into an arm-chair, and drinking a tumbler of wine off at a draught.

She came to him then, not grandly, proudly, triumphantly,—she was too wise to do that,—but meekly, obediently, softly, like a little spaniel, and knelt down at his feet and rained kisses on his lips.

For half an hour they were together ; after that Rose heard her mistress's footsteps on the stairs. She ran to meet her. Fanny pushed her into the bedroom, and throwing herself on the bed, burst into a laugh.

"Will he do it ?" asked Rose, dying with curiosity.

"Yes."

"Hurrah !"

"Upon my word, Rose, I think I shall go on the stage."

"Do, ma'am."

"Have you any thing to drink?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Bring it out, then; I'm as weak as a rat after my performance."

Rose produced a bottle of gin, and poured some in a tumbler.

"Go on, Rose," said her mistress; "fill it up. I could drink a gallon to-day."

And this is how Fanny induced Mr. Francis Wormald to marry her, and make her Mrs. Francis Wormald.

Well, she won her spurs; so she deserves to wear them.

CHAPTER XIX.

ABROAD.

ON the 14th of September 18—, Richard Stoffles was found guilty of stealing certain reams of paper from the mills at Stoke, and sentenced to be kept imprisoned and to hard labour for the term of seven years; on the 14th of September 18—, Fanny, daughter of the man Stoffles, was legally married to Francis Wormald, at the church of the Holy Trinity, at Bayswater: which was a singular coincidence.

Gentleman Barton continued to elude the vigilance of the police, and Mr. Isaac Watts was sufficiently clever to keep himself out of danger.

After her marriage, Fanny went abroad; and as a matter of course Wormald soon discovered how he had been duped, for she quickly threw off the disguise she had assumed, and resumed her wonted demeanour. He was excessively annoyed at the deception she had practised upon him, and she wasn't slow in perceiving that he liked her the less for it. This did not worry her particularly, for she had gained her point; and if he left her without reasonable grounds, he would be obliged to support her.

The awakening from his dream was a rude one. They were married on Saturday; on Sunday they were in Paris, staying at the Hôtel Bristol. Gushing over with sentimental tenderness,—a thing, by the way, rather foreign to his nature,—he exclaimed at breakfast, as he was discussing some cutlets tomatoed with potatoes *à la maître*, “Would you not like to go to church, dearest?”

“There are no churches here.”

“Yes, there are.”

“English, I mean.”

“Oh, yes.”

“Where?”

“There is one in the Rue d'Aggesscau: will you go?”

“What's to be seen there?”

“Seen!”

“A good set of people?”

“The best English residents in Paris. They have done away with the chapel at the Embassy now.”

"Oh, have they?" she replied, still avoiding giving an answer to his query.

"I shall be glad to go with you, if you wish it," said Wormald; "for although I do not care about that sort of thing myself, I like to respect people's prejudices."

"I don't care about going; I'm rather tired."

"Is that an excuse?"

"I don't want to go, if you will have a plain answer," she said hastily.

"Has your religious fit evaporated already?"

"Yes, it has. I only wanted to go to church *once*. I have been, and now I am satisfied."

"In plain English, you have made a d— fool of me?"

"If you like to put it in strong language, yes."

"Do you mean to sit there and tell me that you hadn't a conviction of original sin, or something?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I *must* be an ass!"

"That's just what I thought."

Wormald was very much annoyed and displeased at the discovery he had made. He found, now it was too late, that he had been entrapped into a disastrous marriage by a clever and unscrupulous courtesan. He had all along prided himself on his tact and acumen; he had imagined himself, in his own parlance, "a devilish clever fellow;" but he now discovered that he was little better than a child in Fanny's hands. Fanny had preyed upon his feelings, and made a fool of him; and much as he loved her he felt the deception she had practised upon him

so keenly, that he experienced a total revulsion of feeling—he almost hated her. One circumstance he congratulated himself upon, and that was, he had not settled so much as a halfpenny upon her ; and if he left her, she would merely have the barren title of wife to console her. Yet his marriage was an ugly fact, and one that stuck in his throat. It had blighted his young existence. He had not been united to the woman a fortnight, and here he was beginning to hate his bride. Hatred grows quickly enough. Probably in a few weeks more he would loathe her, and avoid her society as much as possible, hating the night-time because it would bring both their heads on the same pillow, and cursing the day because it showed him the standing monument of his folly—the subtle deceiver, whose dazzling beauty did not in his eyes suffice to condone her offence. He got tired of her beauty. Her large lustrous eyes worried him. He had formerly thought them lovely and poetical ; now, he said, she stared at him. The long lashes he had once admired so much he now called meretricious. Her teeth were unnaturally white, and her rosy lips looked as if they were painted. Once he had never been so happy as when pressing her to his heart in an amorous embrace ; but now, if he so much as kissed her, a shudder ran through his veins. This state of affairs could not last long. Fanny saw this, but the discovery did not trouble her much. She was his wife, that was all she cared about ; he had, of his own free will, made her Mrs. Wormald : after that, *ruat cælum* ! what did any thing matter to her ? Bickerings and quarrels

were the order of the day with them, and they lived a life of dissension from morning till night. They had now been at Paris ten days ; Fanny was continually wanting to go somewhere. One rainy day, at breakfast, she exclaimed, "What can we do to-day?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Wormald, unwrapping a cutlet from its paper covering.

"You never do know."

"You are sure to say something amiable."

"So are you," she replied. "You are so disagreeable, that no woman but myself would live with you."

"I'm sure I don't want you to."

"What would you do without me?"

"I shouldn't break my heart."

"Would you like to get rid of me?" she asked.

"I wish to God I knew how!" he replied savagely.

"I dare say you do ; but you can't do it, old fellow—you can't do it. I'm your wife ; do you see that ?—I'm your wife. That licks you, doesn't it ? You leave me, and see what I'll do to you. I'll follow you to the end of the world, and back again. I can do it, because I'm your wife."

Whenever she said, "I'm your wife," the phrase pierced through Wormald, and stabbed him as if a knife had been suddenly inserted in his back.

"I know you are my wife," he said ; "and I wish I'd been dead before I married you."

"Do you ? Well, you are not dead, and not

likely to die ; and as long as you live, you'll have to keep me, or the law will make you."

"Will you consent to a separation?" he asked, looking anxiously at her.

"What's the good of that?"

"I'll make you a liberal allowance."

"What do you call liberal?"

"You shall have a thousand a year ; will that buy you off?"

"No ; it's not enough."

"Fifteen hundred?"

"That's better."

"Will you take it?"

"I don't know," she replied. "I've never had a husband before, and I look upon you as a sort of luxury. I'm not tired of you yet : when I am, I'll take your money, and you may go to—"

She broke off abruptly, without saying where he might go to. Perhaps she meant Constantinople—and perhaps she didn't.

"If you accept my terms," said Wormald, "I shall expect you to live decently and respectably."

"What do you call decently? I suppose if I meet any of my old cronies I may speak to them?"

"Certainly not," he answered decidedly.

"Oh, well, your opinion doesn't matter much ; I'm not very likely to consult you."

"What makes you try and say all the disagreeable things you can think of, Fanny?" exclaimed Wormald.

"Because you're a brute to me."

"You deceived me."

"So much the better."

"I hate being deceived."

"I can't help that. It was my game to take you in. I might have lived with you another six months or so, and you would have grown tired of me and cut me ; but now you can't cut me, my boy,—you've tied the halter round your own neck."

"There's the Divorce Court," he said hopefully.

"Yes, there is. I know all about that ; but I'm not so fond of the men as to give you a chance of putting that little bit of machinery in motion. You may take your dying oath of one thing, Frank."

"What's that ?"

"I'll stick to you as long as I live. I'll be a living leech to you."

"Perhaps you won't live for ever," he said gloomily, while a smile of peculiar meaning flitted over his face.

This was the way in which they continually quarrelled. These disturbances usually wound up in the following way : Fanny would say, "Are you going to take me any where ?"

"No."

"You're not ?"

"I shall not go out till the afternoon."

"I shall start without you, then."

"Please yourself."

"I know where I can meet some jolly fellows."

"Where ?"

"That doesn't matter. Ring the bell, and order me a *voiture*."

"The bell's nearer you than me."

"What a nice, gentlemanly fellow you are !" she would remark sarcastically.

"Think so ?"

"Yes, your marriage has improved you."

"Where are you going, Fanny ?"

"Out."

"I know that ; but where ?"

"To see some fellows I know."

"Who ?"

"Oh, Radcliffe, and Hastings, and a few more."

"How do you know they're in Paris ?"

"I met them on the Boulevards."

"When ?"

"As I was going to buy some silk at the Lyon-nise Company's."

This was a pure fiction, but it had its weight with Wormald, who, to prevent her going, as he thought, to see the men she spoke of, yielded to her wishes, and agreed to accompany her.

"I'll go, Fanny, if you won't stop out long."

"I shall stop as long as it suits me. Ring the bell."

He did so, and, like a conquered army in the olden time, passed under the (conjugal) yoke.

Wormald at last grew desperate. He could not bear her tyrannical ways and her imperious airs ; so he made arrangements with his agent in Paris to pay Fanny fifteen hundred a year, in quarterly instalments, and without taking leave of her, or saying a word of good by, started off for Baden, where he hoped to forget his folly. He remembered the old

adage, "If you give a fool rope enough, he will hang himself;" and he thought that, if he allowed Fanny to have unlimited liberty, she would either plunge into a career of dissipation and kill herself, or carry on an intrigue with some man, which would give him reasonable grounds for obtaining a divorce. If, at the expiration of a year, he found that she had led a pure and virtuous life, he intended to stop her allowance, and see if he could not *drive* her to a course of immorality from sheer necessity and penury. All he wanted her to do was to commit an act of adultery. If he could once bring that home to her, he would cite her before the Divorce Court, and, with a heart overflowing with thankfulness, wash his hands of her.

Fanny did not take his sudden departure much to heart; she did not expect he would leave her so suddenly, but the liberality of his allowance consoled her for his absence. She was dressing in the morning, when Rose brought her Wormald's valedictory note.

"Here is a note for you, ma'am," said Rose.

"Who from?"

"I think it looks like master's writing."

"Your master?"

"Yes."

"Give it me—quick."

Fanny took the letter, opened it, ran her eye over it, and turned a shade paler.

"What's the matter?" asked Rose, rather concerned.

"He's gone!"

"Who's gone—not master?"

"Yes."

"And left us all alone in a foreign country! Oh, dear me, what shall we do?"

"Do, you fool!—why, lots of things. He's left me plenty of money."

"Then it don't matter."

"Not a bit. I'm glad to get rid of him."

"Why, ma'am, you're as good as a widow," said Rose, "and not been married a month!"

"Better be a widow than his wife," remarked Fanny savagely.

What Wormald had expected soon came to pass. Fanny found her life at the hotel dull, so she moved into lodgings, where she was more her own mistress. She had no difficulty in meeting some of her old acquaintances, for men are continually running through Paris. One day, in the Bois, she ran up against a young fellow in the Guards, whom she had known a little in London. He was on horseback; she was in a hired carriage: he, of course, was delighted with the *rencontre*, and so was she. He rode by the side of the carriage, and an animated conversation ensued between them.

"I really should not have thought of seeing you in Paris," exclaimed Mr. Ernest Wilmer, the gentleman in question.

"Would you not?" she returned, with a bright smile. "I can do what I like now."

"How is that?"

"I am married."

"Really!"

"I dare say you have met my husband?"

"What is his name?"

"Frank Wormald."

"Of Osbaldiston?"

"I believe that is the name of his father's place. They are cotton-spinning people."

"Yes, they are. I am a Lancashire man myself, and know most of the families about the county."

"We have separated, though," she continued.

"So soon?"

"Not so *very* soon. We had a month or so of it, and found we couldn't agree. So he has gone somewhere—I really don't know where—and I am staying in Paris."

"Do you not find it rather lonely?"

"Occasionally "

"May I have the honour of calling?"

"I shall be glad to see you."

"Where are you staying?"

"In the Rue de Ponthieu."

"Near the Champs?"

"Yes."

"I shall certainly have the pleasure of calling."

Wilmer lifted his hat, and rode on. Fanny found him an agreeable companion, and cared so little for her husband, that she showed herself openly with Wilmer, and was very much in his society for nearly a month. He was tolerably well off, for his father made him a liberal allowance. One day he received a letter from home, telling him to return instantly, as certain reports prejudicial to his virtue and chastity had reached the paternal ears. Pleading urgent private affairs to Fanny, Wilmer started for England;

but before his father would make peace with him, he demanded his accounts. So Wilmer sat down at his desk, produced his bills, and plunged into a formidable array of figures.

"This is something like preparing one's schedule," he muttered.

When all was in readiness, he went to his father, who received him in the library. The old gentleman took the long and fluttering sheet, and holding it up in his hand, ran his eye over the several items. He read some of them aloud, beginning with—

	£	s.	d.
"Mess expenses .	20	0	0
Charity	5	0	0
Charity .	2	0	0'

"Very good, my boy; very good.

"Hair-cutting	1	0	0
Hotel bill .	11	10	0
Charity .	5	0	0
Hair-cutting .	2	0	0
Hire of horse .	7	15	0
Charity	3	0	0
Charity .	2	0	0
Hair-cutting	4	0	0'

"'Hair-cutting'!" exclaimed the old gentleman, in some perplexity. "I say, Erny, what's the meaning of 'hair-cutting' so often, eh?"

Ernest coloured up a little, and replied :

"The junior cornet of the company, sir, always has to pay for the men's hair being cut."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Well, I should never have

guessed it if you hadn't told me. What's the next! where did we leave off? Oh! 'Hair-cutting.' Let me see; ah! I have it: 'Charity, a pound.' I approve of that. 'Freely ye have received, freely give,' you know.

	£	s.	d.
"Tailor . . .	25	0	0
Hair-cutting . .	3	0	0
Bootmaker . . .	5	0	0
Saddler	6	7	6
Hair-cutting . .	11	0	0
Charity	5	0	0
Hair-cutting . .	10	0	0
Charity	15	0	0
Hair-cutting . .	17	0	0
Charity	20	0	0
Hair-cutting . .	6	0	0
Charity	25	0	0
Hair-cutting . .	30	0	0'

"Why, God bless my soul!" said the old man, "you'd better sell out of your regiment, I think, or else that 'hair-cutting' business will be the ruin of you. In all my born days, I never saw any thing like it. How many men have you got in your company?"

"Those last items are for battalion hair-cutting," explained Wilmer, almost suffocating himself with ineffectual attempts to stop his laughter.

The old man sank into a chair and mused a moment, and then he said: "Ernest!"

"Yes, sir."

"That 'Hair-cutting' is a *façon de parler*, isn't it?"

"Well, it's our way of putting it."

"Oh! You can't write it down in black and white, eh?"

"Doesn't read so smoothly."

"Go along! Sad dog, sad dog!" said Mr. Wilmer, while a smile hovered around the corners of his mouth.

His son was about to leave the room, when the father called him back, saying:

"I should stop that battalion 'hair-cutting,' if I were you."

"Very well, sir. You do not object to the company 'hair-cutting'?"

"Object! of course I do. But there's another thing!"

"What's that, sir?"

"Don't be quite so generous."

"In what way?"

"In the matter of 'charity.'"

"All right."

"Charity's all very well; but it's possible to go a little too far. There; that's all. Where are you off to now?"

"Going to have my hair cut, sir," replied Cornet Wilmer, with a smile of peculiar significance.

"No! I'll be hanged if you do!" cried the old man, springing from his chair, and catching him by the arm. "Go round to the stables, order the trap, and drive me down to Greenwich to dine."



After a time, Fanny grew tired of Paris, and held a consultation with Rose as to where she should go. Rose had a certain talent of her own, and was very clever in giving advice. Fanny held her opinions in high estimation, for she remembered that it was through Rose's sagacious plot that she had inveigled Wormald into marrying her.

"Shall we go back to England, Rose?" said Fanny.

"I think not," replied Rose, shaking her head.

"Where shall we go, then?"

"Wouldn't you like to visit some of those places where they gamble?"

"What places?"

"Why, those you read about in *Galignani*, where all the English swells are at this time of the year."

"You mean Baden?"

"Yes; and Homburg."

"I have no objection. Suppose we say Baden?" exclaimed Fanny. "When shall we start?"

"As soon as you like, ma'am. It will not take me very long to put your things together," replied Rose.

"Get a book, and find out the trains."

"Oh, I couldn't," replied Rose. "I never was able yet to make head or tail of a *Bradshaw*, let alone a *Continental*."

"Ask the man at the *Caisse*."

"What railway is it?"

"It's going towards the east; so I suppose it's

the *Chemin de fer de l'Est*," said Fanny, who had picked up a smattering of French,—“what we should call the Eastern Counties.”

“All right, ma'am ; I'll find out,” replied Rose, going down-stairs. And she did find out that a train started early the next morning. So the widow lady and her maid left Paris for Baden, and arrived there safely. She did not care much about the place. She thought it something like Scarborough and Bath, with a dash of Cheltenham and Great Malvern in them. As it happened, Wormald was still at the Baths, never dreaming that his unlucky stars would bring his charming and deserted wife into the very town, of all others, he wished her vagrant footsteps to avoid. Of course he had put up at the best hotel ; of course Fanny did the same. Wormald was the powder-magazine ; Fanny was the match : and when magazine and match came together, it was only fair to expect an explosion. Each suite of apartments had a balcony, and in these balconies the inhabitants sat after dinner, or when it pleased them. It was amusing to see the people pass up and down the *Strasse* ; and the evening air was cool and agreeable. Fanny and Rose followed the prevailing custom ; but they had not been long in their balcony before they heard some voices close to them. It was growing dark, and Fanny could not distinguish the faces of the dusky forms so close to her, although she could plainly overhear their conversation. It seemed to her that some gentleman was talking to a lady. Suddenly she touched Rose on the elbow, and whispered :

"Do you hear that man speaking over there?"

"Yes."

"Do you recognise his voice?"

"No, ma'am."

"I do, then. It's Wormald! It's *my husband!*"

Rose was too astonished to speak.

"Hold your tongue," continued Fanny; "don't say a single word. I want to hear what he's got to say to that woman who's with him."

Fanny composed herself in her chair in a comfortable position for listening, and Wormald, unconsciously, played admirably into her hand.

The lady spoke first, in a pleased and cheerful tone, saying :

"I am much obliged, Mr. Wormald, for your kind invitation ; but do you think mamma would allow me to go?"

"I think so, or I should not have asked you. Surely there is no impropriety."

"I—I hardly know," she answered timidly.

"I'll let her know presently," muttered Fanny.

"I wish," said Wormald, "that I had the power of directing your movements."

"Do you?"

"Yes. I wish it ardently."

"What would you do with me?"

"I would dress you in white."

"Well, what next?"

"I'd put orange-blossom in your hair."

"And after that?"

"Take you à l'église."

"To church! What for?" inquired the young

lady, with a charming affectation of simplicity and ignorance.

"To make you my wife," replied Wormald, in a low, thrilling tone.

"I say, Rose!" whispered Fanny.

"Yes, m'm."

"Did you hear that?"

"I did, the villain!"

"He's going in for bigamy."

"So he is."

"Won't I spoil his little game!"

"Perhaps he's been reading *Lady Audley's Secret*!"

"Wait a bit. Let's hear what she says to it."

"Do you really love me so much?" said the young lady.

"I love you, dearest, better than my life," replied Wormald.

She sighed, he sighed, and they mingled their sighs together.

"Am I indifferent to you?" Wormald asked anxiously.

"N-no."

There was a peculiar sound, as if some osculatory process was going on.

"Rose!" cried Fanny.

"Yes, m'm."

"I can't stand that, you know. I think he's kissing her. Come along."

They left the balcony in a hurry, and Fanny rushed into the passage, where she met a waiter.

"Waiter!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, mees."

"Are these rooms next to mine Mr. Wormald's apartments?"

"Monsieur Wormald! No, mees. It is ze room of Miladi ze Comptesse Ardenford. M. Wormald, he dine there—dine there ver often. There is yong lady—ha! I have hear him say, '*Mai dere, je vous aime avec tendresse.*'"

"Is Mr. Wormald there now?"

"*Oui.* That is, I do so think."

Fanny opened the door, and saw sitting at the table an elderly lady, whom she at once supposed to be Lady Ardenford, of whom the waiter had spoken.

Her ladyship looked hard at Fanny, and exclaimed, "Who do you want?"

"Are you Mrs. Ardenford?" replied Fanny, calling her "Mrs." out of sheer impudence, and a wish to annoy her.

"I am Lady Ardenford."

"Oh; then I don't want you."

Lady Ardenford moved towards the bell-rope and pulled it, saying, "I think you must have made some mistake. I shall ask one of the attendants at the hotel to set you right."

"You may ring," cried Fanny; "ring the bell down, if you like. I want Mr. Wormald."

"He's in the balcony. If you will retire to the passage, I will let him know that a young person wishes to see him."

"Don't you call me a 'young person,' if you please," said Fanny indignantly. "If you do, you'll have something at your head precious quick, I can tell you!"

As she spoke, she moved towards the balcony. Lady Ardenford put herself in the way, and endeavoured to prevent her progressing any more towards it ; but she was not acquainted with Fanny's determination. That young lady took her opponent by the two arms, and spun her round like a teetotum. She lost her equilibrium, and fell heavily on the carpet.

"Oh, mum," cried Rose, "that's an assault !"

"Yes ; and there'll be another presently. Won't I wool him out !"

As she reached the open window, Miss Ardenford emerged from the balcony, exclaiming, "O mamma !" but when she saw her prostrate parent, and heard her groaning like a mud-bound hippopotamus, she drew back.

"You'd better go to your mamma," said Fanny ; "she wants a little assistance."

"Who are you ?" said Miss Ardenford.

"Get out of the way, or I'll soon let you know who I am."

"O Frank, dear !" said Miss Ardenford, retreating towards her lover.

"I'll 'Frank, dear !' both of you," said Fanny.

As the tones of her voice fell upon Frank Wormald's ears, he felt so faint that he nearly fell to the ground : all the blood left his face ; his heart almost ceased to beat, and then it pulsed with a fierce palpitation that nearly choked him. He looked over the iron-work of the balcony, and calculated the length he should have to drop if he jumped into the street. His meditation was cut short by Fanny, who caught

hold of him by the arm, and said, "Do you know who I am?"

He could see her eyes glaring at him through the uncertain light, and replied, in a tremulous voice, "Fanny!"

"Oh, you know me, do you? Here, come out of this. I want to have you in the light, so that I can get a good look at you."

She dragged him by main force almost out of the balcony into the drawing-room. Lady Ardenford had risen to her feet, and was sitting in an arm-chair, and in a semi-hysterical condition. Her daughter was half-kneeling, half-crouching by her side.

The servants of the hotel stationed in that particular passage came in answer to her ladyship's ring, and stood on the threshold waiting for orders. The sight of them roused Lady Ardenford, and checking her sobs, she exclaimed, "Be good enough to leave the room, young woman, or I shall be under the necessity, painful though it may be, of having you removed."

"Are you talking to me?" said Fanny.

"Yes!"

"Have me turned out, eh?"

"Certainly."

"Who's to do it?"

"I have no doubt the proprietors of the hotel will solve that question."

"They are perfectly welcome to try," replied Fanny.

"I appeal to you, Mr. Wormald," said Lady Ardenford.

Wormald did not know what to do ; so he stood placidly still, and never uttered a word.

"If a gentleman with whom I am on friendly terms will not protect me," she replied, "I must call in the aid of strangers. Waiter, send the manager of the hotel to me."

Fanny now turned her attention to Lady Ardenford, and said, "I suppose you thought you'd hook the man in for your daughter?"

"I do not wish to speak to you."

"Don't you?"

"Or have any thing to do with you."

"Really!"

"Or to hold any sort of communication with you."

"Well, as it happens, I *do* wish to speak to you, and so you will have to listen. Mr. Wormald can never marry your daughter!"

The daughter drew herself nearer to her mother, and whispered something to her. Her ladyship replied audibly, "Never mind, Angy; I will see you protected."

Angelina seemed a little comforted; but there was a look of wild and restless expectation upon her pallid features which was painful to behold.

"Shall I tell you why Mr. Wormald can never marry the girl?" continued Fanny.

Lady Ardenford averted her countenance, and looked stolidly on the ground.

Wormald grasped Fanny by the arm, and said in a low tone, "Come away—some other time! Let them find it out, will you?—for my sake."

"Your sake!" she iterated scornfully; "I wouldn't cross the road for your sake."

"Listen to reason, Fanny!"

"Oh, yes, it's all very fine!"

"Fanny!" he said despairingly.

She took no notice of him, but exclaimed, "He cannot marry her, because he has a wife alive."

"A wife!" echoed both mother and daughter.

"Yes," she said firmly.

Angelina rose to her feet, and stared at Fanny in a dazed manner.

"How do you know this?" asked Lady Ardenford, roused in spite of herself.

"I think I ought to know it."

"I do not believe you," said her ladyship. "You are a bad, wicked woman!"

"And who are you?" said Fanny. "It's lucky I happened to drop in on you this evening. If I had not, your daughter's market would have been spoilt to a certainty."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say."

"Where is this wife you speak of? Can you produce her?"

"I can."

"Where is she?"

"Here!" cried Fanny, in a theatrical tone of voice.

"You!"

"Yes! Let him deny it, if he can."

"Mr. Wormald, is this woman your wife?"

Now that the inevitable crash had come, Worm-

ald put the best face he could upon the matter, and made a virtue of necessity.

"I have the honour of being this lady's husband," he replied.

"Then, sir, you are a scoundrel!"

"Possibly."

"And I'll have you punished!" vociferated Lady Ardenford.

"I doubt your ability, although I do not question your inclination," he replied coolly.

During this colloquy, Angelina—who was a fair-haired, pale-faced, simple-minded girl—crept up to Fanny's side, and said, in a low voice, "Is it true? Will you please tell me if it is true?"

"Is what true?" demanded Fanny roughly, looking down suspiciously at the girl, and impatient of her interruption.

"About his wife?" replied Angelina timidly.

"Of course it's true, or I shouldn't say so."

"Are you *really* his wife?"

"If you don't believe me, you had better ask him; perhaps he'll tell you."

"Pray do not joke with me!"

"I'm not joking."

"Because he promised to marry me."

"It's lucky for you, then, that he didn't, for he made me his wife some months ago," said Fanny, without an atom of compassion, and never thinking how she was wringing the poor girl's heart.

Angelina took a long look at Fanny's face, as if she thought she could read the truth there. It was a stern, uncompromising face that night, and there

was more of bad than good displayed on her countenance. After looking at Fanny, Angelina turned away with a doubting expression, and cast her gaze on Wormald. It was not a long, fond, lingering look, but a rapid, shuddering survey. She read the truth there. His pallor, his agitation, the way in which he bit his nether lip, all told her that every word Fanny spoke was as true as the Gospel. Her heart sank within her; for she had loved this man. Although so quiet and unassuming externally, there was a fierce under-current of sentiment and feeling always running through her. She had indulged ambitious hopes, and built castles in the air, but all her plans and airy edifices were rudely dashed to the ground. She tottered up to her mother's side again, and saying feebly, "Mamma, he is married; it is all true!" sank down in an insensible heap at her parent's feet.

Lady Ardenford concentrated all her attention on her daughter; and Fanny, putting her arm through that of Wormald, drew him out of the room. He followed her passively enough, and they entered Fanny's apartments. The lights were burning on the table, and Rose closed the windows. Fanny looked steadily at him; there was no flinching about her. Wormald lighted a cigar—that invariable resource of men when they are embarrassed.

"So, I've bowled you out at last!" she exclaimed.

"The process has been accomplished with your usual ability," he replied, sending a cloud of smoke circling and gyrating into the air.

"Oh, you may chaff, but it won't alter the fact."

"I do not wish it to."

"What were you going to do with that woman?"

"Oh, I don't know," he said, with a shrug of the shoulders; "I am an idle man, and one must pass one's time somehow."

"You knew you couldn't marry her!"

"Of course I did."

"You meant to treat her as you have treated me, I suppose?"

"How is that?"

"Make use of her, and then leave her."

"Possibly," he returned, coolly enough.

There was a pause, at the end of which he said, "Baden is a nice place."

"Is it?"

"Yes; I think you will like it. Do you intend to stay long?"

"Do you?"

"That depends."

"On what?"

"On circumstances."

"I shall stop," she exclaimed in a decided tone, "exactly as long as you do."

"In that case, my dear child, you will leave Baden in half an hour."

"Half an hour!" she echoed.

"Thirty minutes, if that will please you better. I don't think the atmosphere of the place agrees with me; I want change of air."

"It is too hot for you, perhaps."

"If it is not now, it soon will be."

"Well, I shall go with you. It is so long since

I saw you, that I can't afford to part with you all at once."

"I shall be very glad of your company," answered Wormald, who could see no escape from the dilemma. In his secret heart, he wished Fanny would fall down dead at his feet; but as that young lady's constitution was at one and the same time young and vigorous, there was little chance of so direful a catastrophe taking place. He knew he could not stay in Baden, because he had treated Angelina Ardenford in a most ungentlemanly and unjustifiable manner. He was unable to defend his conduct on any ground whatever, and his only chance of avoiding contumely and insult from those who had formerly been his friends and companions was to leave the place before the report of his conduct got about. He relied upon his inventive faculties to supply him with some means of getting rid of Fanny again in a short space of time; so he put on the mask of the hypocrite, and pretended to take a great and sudden interest in her, whilst he was far from feeling one iota of affection, or the slightest scintillation of love, for his lovely but deceitful bride.

"Where are you going to take me?" asked Fanny.

"We had better go to Switzerland, I think—say Basle."

"All right. I should like to do one thing, though, before I leave the hotel."

"What is that?"

"Just tell the old lady next door what I think of her."

"Lady Ardenford !"

"Yes; who is she ?"

"Only the widow of an ex-Lord Mayor."

"Oh," said Fanny, "only that !"

"That is all."

"Oh, I see ; the daughter was fair game."

It was all very well for Fanny to make light of the matter ; but the ex-Lady Mayoress, for all that, had her poor daughter thrown on her hands with a broken heart, and all because she was considered fair game" for an aristocratic seducer.

CHAPTER XX.

AT HER MERCY.

AT Basle, at the Hôtel des Étrangers, ever so much more English than Swiss, and more French than either ; Fanny in her *chambre à coucher*, with Rose companion of her unoccupied moments. To her, Fanny :

"Where's that Circassian stuff of Rachel's ?"

"Packed up, I think."

"Unpack it, then. I want it."

Rose, after some search, contrived to find the required wash. Fanny ran her fine silken hair through her fingers, and admired it silently.

"Isn't my hair beautiful, Rose !"

"That it is, ma'am."

"Lots of men have thought so. I wish I had as many sovereigns as my hair has had kisses, Rose."

"So do I, ma'am."

"Give me that stuff."

Rose uncorked a bottle, and poured a bright-coloured fluid into a saucer, which she handed, together with a sponge, to her mistress, who said :

"Here, you put it on—I'm too lazy."

Rose wetted the sponge, and then damped Fanny's hair ; as the wash dried, her hair assumed a rich golden colour.

"Will that do, ma'am ?" asked Rose, adjusting the *face et nuque* mirror to her satisfaction.

"Yes, that will do. Was that a knock at the door ?"

"I'll see."

Rose went to the door, and opened it.

"Can I come in ?" exclaimed a voice.

"It's master, ma'am," said Rose.

"Oh, it's you, Frank : come in."

He entered the room, and taking a chair, sat down by Fanny, and looked wonderingly at her.

"Isn't it a dodge !" she exclaimed. "Do you like it ?"

"Yes, it is very pretty ; will it last ?"

"A few days. I want to go back to London ; I'm tired of frog-eating."

"I do not care about staying here."

"Let us give the Continent the go-by, then, and hook it off at once."

"I'm game," he replied. "Shall we go back to Ingarwick ?"

"Have we kept the house on ?"

"Oh, yes, I am still paying rent for it."

"Rose," said Fanny, "go and order some of their absinthe stuff, will you?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Rose, with alacrity.

Frank Wormald had not again deserted his wife. Although he detested her, he was obliged to wear the mask of the hypocrite ; and he did so, much against his will. She had completely disconcerted him by coming so suddenly upon him at Baden. He felt like a man who has had his stumps scattered by an unerring ball ; and all he could do was to sling his bat over his shoulder, and wait for a second innings. They returned to England, and once more took up their abode at Ingarwick. The winter was coming on, and the golden sunshine became less and less frequent day by day. The leaves fell from the trees, and the boughs looked bare and desolate : all nature seemed preparing to hibernate. The dormice went to sleep ; the squirrels laid in stores of nuts ; and the ants occupied themselves, like the honey bees, with in-door pursuits. Crôquet was given up for billiards and cozy gossipings by the fireside ; the November fogs made their appearance, and all was cold, chill, and uncomfortable. The damask curtains were drawn closely around the windows at Ingarwick, a sea-coal fire blazed in the grate, and Wormald and his wife were sitting moodily on a sofa. Suddenly Fanny raised her head, and said, "Did you hear a noise outside the window?"

"No," he replied absently. His thoughts were far away. He was thinking of the blight he had allowed to fall on his young life, and wondering if

he should ever be able to shake it off, and call himself a free man once more. He was willing to do much to achieve his freedom, and there was a little voice whispering in his ear, and telling him to sin for it. He was listening to the little voice when Fanny spoke to him.

"I am sure I heard something," she persisted.

"The wind, perhaps."

"No, it wasn't the wind."

"Your fancy, then."

"No. Just run and see, will you?"

"How troublesome you are, Fanny, with your ridiculous ideas!"

"I suppose I shall have to go myself," she said.

"What necessity is there for going at all?"

"Because I am curious to know what the noise is. There it is again."

This time Wormald heard distinctly a sort of scratching at the window, as if some one was grating his nails against the glass.

"By Jove, you are right!" he said.

"Of course I am; I do not go dreaming half my time, as you do."

"Shall I throw the window open?"

"No, don't do that."

"Why not?"

"How do you know who it may be? Perhaps it's a robber, who wants to get in. Take a stick, and go out at the front door."

"All right," replied Wormald.

Putting on his hat, and taking a thick stick from a rack in the hall, he opened the front-door carefully,

and walked round to the window. His foot struck against something which yielded to the touch, as if it was shrinking away from him. A groan rose up from the very ground, as it were.

"Who's there?" exclaimed Wormald, recoiling a step.

Through the semi-darkness he perceived a dusky mass, which rose up from the earth, and stood fronting him. Two eyes glared at him, like those of a wild-beast in a state of hunger.

"For the love of God!" exclaimed a hollow voice, "don't drive me away."

"Who are you?"

"A poor fellow who will bless you for ever for a night's lodging."

"We don't keep an inn."

"I know that, sir."

"Go away, then."

"Just for one night, sir!"

"Certainly not. I'm not in the habit of taking in a lot of tramping fellows."

"It's a charity, sir!"

"It may be; but I don't see it," replied Wormald.

"I'll sleep any where, sir."

"I won't have you, I tell you."

"A couple of planks, sir?"

"No."

"A bit of fodder?"

"No."

"I'll sleep on the bricks in your scullery, sir."

"I dare say you would, if you got the chance,

and walk off in the night with the cold mutton. No, my man, you don't come the old soldier over me."

The man uttered a despairing cry.

"What's the row, and who is it?" exclaimed Fanny, from the threshold of the door, whither her womanly curiosity had drawn her.

"Some begging fellow."

"What does he want?"

"A night's lodging."

"And what have you told him?"

"Told him he can't have it."

"Well, then, I'll tell him he can."

"What!" ejaculated Wormald.

"I won't have a poor, half-starving man driven from the door."

"How do you know he's not a burglar, Fanny, and is trying to plant us?"

"I'll take my chance of that."

"Are you mad this evening?"

"No; are you?"

"Fanny!"

"It's no use talking. Tell the poor beggar to come in."

"I'll be d— before I do!" replied Wormald sulkily.

"No, of course not; you never will do any thing I ask you."

"You'd better do it yourself."

"That won't frighten me."

She took a step or two into the garden. The light from the lamp she had placed on the floor of the passage streamed out on the neatly-gravelled

path in a ghostly manner, and made the darkness of the night hideous.

"Where are you, poor man?" exclaimed Fanny.

Presently she heard footsteps approaching her.

"Follow me," she said, leading the way into the house.

Wormald had returned to the sitting-room, where he impatiently waited the sequel of this strange adventure. He kept the stick firmly grasped in his hand, as if he expected that he might be called upon to use it before long.

The mendicant followed his conductress into the passage, and from thence into the kitchen. He put his hands over his eyes when he got there, as if the light hurt them. The cook was out; she had gone into the village to make a purchase. No one but Rose was in the region devoted to the cultivation of the culinary art. Placing the lamp on the table, Fanny took a good look at her pensioner, and was surprised beyond measure to see that he was bare-headed, and wore a yellow jacket and a pair of coarse canvas breeches.

"What a strange dress!" she said to herself.

"Oh!" exclaimed Rose, in the voice of one who has made a discovery.

Her mistress looked inquiringly at her.

"He's a convict-man."

"A what?"

"A convict. Perhaps he's escaped. Oh, dear, it isn't safe to have him in the house."

The man withdrew his hand from his eyes as he heard this colloquy, and disclosed a countenance so

haggard, so wretched, so woe-begone, that it was painful to look at it. There was something in that face, though, which struck Fanny. It was not the wretchedness, or the misery, or the despair. She thought she traced a likeness. The man himself was apparently occupied in the same manner; but he shrank away from Fanny, and sank into a chair, once more covering his face with his hand. In a determined manner Fanny advanced towards him, and pulled his wasted hand away by main force.

"So it's you!" she said roughly.

He made no answer.

"How did you find me out?"

"Chance," he replied in a tremulous voice, but a little above a whisper.

"Chance!" she repeated contemptuously. "Tell that to the marines."

"I swear it was."

"You swear it was!" she repeated sneeringly.

"I wouldn't believe you on your oath."

"Don't be hard on me, my girl!" he said plaintively.

"Yes, DICK STOFFLES," she replied, "I *will* be hard on you; you deserve that I should be hard on you."

"Not now, my girl. I'm down on my luck," he exclaimed.

"When were you ever any thing else? I've never had any thing to thank you for. You've never been like a father to me."

"Stash it *now*, Fanny, will you? I'm not strong enough to bear it."

"You have yourself to thank for it."

"I'm your *father*, Fan ; think of that."

"Think of it !" she cried indignantly. "Yes, when I do think of it, I would wish—"

"Don't, my girl ; don't," he said. "I'm hard put to it. God knows I never intended to come to your house to-night—never dreamt of it ; but knocked up against a brick wall, as I am, with the blood-hounds showing their fangs and in fierce cry behind me—I'll go away from you. Perhaps others will be more charitable than my own flesh and blood. I'll just ask you for a crust of bread and a cup of cold water, and then you shall see the last of me."

"Have you been discharged ?" she asked, a little moved at his appeal.

"No," he said, shaking his head sadly.

"What then ?"

"I've 'scaped," he said doggedly.

"Escaped ! And are they after you ?"

"You may take your oath of that. By this, they're like a pack of hounds in full blare."

"Well, sit down ; I'll see what I can do for you," said Fanny.

"If I'm to stop," said Dick Stoffles, whose face was irradiated with a faint hope, "I should like to get these things off. If you've got an old suit of clothes up-stairs, I'd tumble into them."

"I can find you some. Stay where you are."

Fanny ran up-stairs, and speedily returned with some old clothes of Wormald's, which she gave to Stoffles. Then she drew Rose aside in the passage,

and said, "Don't say a word to Mr. Wormald about this."

"Not I, ma'am; not a syllable shall pass my lips."

"If he is my father, I don't want every body to know it."

"Of course not."

"Say he's some begging fellow—do you see?—and we have taken him in on condition that he works in the garden and cleans the boots, and all that sort of thing."

"I see, ma'am," replied Rose, whose perception was as quick as that of her mistress.

When they returned to the kitchen, they found Dick Stoffles looking another man; for the clothes she had given him metamorphosed him in a most extraordinary manner.

He held his convict-uniform in his hand, and threw it on the kitchen-fire, pressing it down into the flames with the poker, watching it burn with a fierce joy which was almost childish in its intensity. When it had smouldered down to a heap of ashes, and the last shred of it had disappeared, he exclaimed delightedly, "That link in the chain's gone."

"Come and have something to eat," exclaimed Fanny.

Whilst Rose laid the cloth and spread some substantial fare before him, she opened a bottle of stout for him, and he ate with a voracity which was wonderful. When he had finished, he got up, and said to Fanny:

"The Almighty will bless you for this, my girl."

"You were hungry," she replied.

"Hungry! I was that famished, I was fit to drop."

"How did you escape?"

"It was through Gentleman Barton."

"Barton!"

"Do you remember him?"

"That fellow who was always sloping about the 'Market?"

"That's him."

"A pal of Hincks's?"

"Yes. Well, when he heard I was lagged, he let the hue and cry after himself die out, and then he found out where they had tied me by the leg, and came down there. He had some money, and got hold of a 'right screw.'"

"What's that?"

"It's flash slang for a good sort of gaoler or turnkey. And he offered this man a hundred couters if he would let me go. It was some time before we could work it, but at last we did."

"Where is Barton now?"

"I can't tell you. He hooked it off again after he'd squared matters with the gaoler."

"How long is it since you escaped?"

"Nigh a week, now."

"What have you been doing all that time?"

"Tramp."

"And how did you live?"

"Well, there you lick me; I'm blessed if I know," said Dick Stoffles. "It's a wonder to me how

I did live. Once, I know, I was glad of the wash out of a pig's trough."

Fanny turned away, sickened with horror.

"I had a feast one day. You see, I could only travel at night: in the day-time I was forced to lay hid; but one day I got in amongst some beans which were close upon ripe, and I went in for a regular belly-buster."

"Will the police-people come here after you, do you think?"

"God forbid they should, my wench!" replied Stoffles, looking over his shoulder uneasily.

"What do you intend to do?" asked Fanny.

"I should like to go to Yankee Land."

"What would you do there?"

"List in the Federal army, and fight my way up, or get a bullet: I shouldn't much care which. Any thing but go back to Portsmouth."

"What would going to America cost?"

"Twenty pounds would do it fine."

"Twenty!" she said thoughtfully.

"Yes, or less than that."

"Will you keep quiet here for a day or two? and I'll give you the money."

"Will you, Fan?" he cried exultantly.

"Yes."

"It's more than I deserve."

"Never mind that. I should not mind having a Brigadier-General Stoffles in the family. Go and fight, and then I sha'n't be ashamed of you."

"I'll do it," he replied, with a sort of fierce energy.

"But mind one thing," she said earnestly.

"Well!"

"If you sell me!"

"In what way?"

"By going back to the 'Ruins,' and cottoning up to your old pals."

"Oh, never you fear. I'd sooner cut my throat."

"Well, don't do it; because if you do, and I hear of it—"

"What will you do?" he asked curiously.

"I'd go myself," she replied, with the determination of Regulus, "and give the police the 'office.'"

"Don't flurry yourself; I'm not such a fool," he replied, quailing a little beneath her fiery look.

"I'm going to leave you now. Mind you do not take any liberty, or be too familiar with me, when I am with my husband."

He looked up a little incredulously.

"Oh, you may look!" she cried. "I am legally married now."

"I'm glad to hear it."

Wishing him good night, and saying that Rose would show him where to sleep, she made her way to the sitting-room, where Wormald was wondering at her long absence.

"What have you done with your *protégé*?" he asked.

"Given him something to eat, and told him he might have a night's lodging."

"What is he?"

"A discharged soldier."

"Of course."

"Why 'of course'?"

"Those fellows always are discharged soldiers or invalided sailors. I never heard of a cadger yet who wasn't either in one of the two services, or a disabled mechanic."

"You are an unfeeling beast."

"Register the remark, and make it copyright on account of its originality," he said.

"Make me some brandy-and-water," she replied, "and don't be disagreeable."

"For your beggar?"

"No; for myself."

There was something very singular in this accidental meeting between the father and the daughter. At first, Fanny was inclined to drive him from her door; but when she saw the miserable and destitute condition he was in, she moderated her anger, and felt unable to refuse him the temporary shelter he sought and asked for in so humble and submissive a manner.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN ABORTIVE ATTEMPT.

"WILL you go up the river to-day?" exclaimed Wormald one morning, when the sun was shining brightly, and promising a fine day.

"I don't mind," replied Fanny.

"All right; I'll walk down and order the boat. I don't know how it is, but I feel as jolly as a sand-boy."

There was a sinister look about his eyes, though, which belied his words.

"You must not expect me to steer you, Frank," said Fanny. "If there is one thing I dislike more than another, it is steering."

"Why?"

"When I go on the water, I like to enjoy myself, and not have my hands torn to pieces by rough cords. Besides, it is necessary to keep your eyes on the boat, and it is impossible to enjoy the scenery."

"Take some one with you to steer, then," said Wormald.

"Who shall I take?"

"Won't that fellow you picked up the other night do?"

"Oh, yes, I'll tell him to get himself ready."

"Look here, Fanny!" suddenly exclaimed Wormald; "let him take the towing-rope, and tow us along; it will be much more comfortable, and I can smoke and talk to you."

"Just as you like," she replied.

She went out of the room, and found Dick Stoffles making himself useful in the garden, which was very much to his credit. There had been a slight shower of rain, and he was hoeing the ground round the roots of the cabbages. Fanny beckoned to her convict-father, and when he joined her, she said, "I want you to go out with us to-day."

"I'd rather not," he replied hesitatingly.

"What are you afraid of?"

"Some one might recognise me."

"Not they!"

"I don't know. You see, the authorities at Portsmouth are sure to have circulated a description of me, and perhaps a reward has been offered; at all events, the different police-stations are safe to have descriptions of me."

"No one will think of looking for you at Ingarwick."

"It's just at a quiet place like Ingarwick that they would look," replied Stoffles.

"Oh, never mind," said Fanny impatiently; "if you don't like to come, stop where you are. I thought you might do something for your living."

"I am perfectly willing to do so. I was hoeing the cabbages."

"Better have left them alone."

"Can't you get some one else to go with you, my girl?" said Dick Stoffles. "I would much rather keep dark."

"Oh, keep dark, then. I don't want to see you get into trouble, Goodness knows; only, I am sure nothing can hurt you just going up the river a little way."

"Well, I'll go," replied Stoffles, convinced against his will, and consequently of the same opinion still.

"You will?"

"Yes; but if any thing comes of it, don't blame me. Don't say I ran my own head into the noose."

"You are frightening yourself at shadows."

"Maybe; but I have a presentiment."

"Ask the servant," said Fanny, "for the towing-rope, it is somewhere about the kitchen; and when we go, come after us, and stick as close to us as you like."

Fanny dressed herself in a light muslin, and walked towards the water with Wormald, who seemed to try and be as amiable as he possibly could make himself. This was unusual, and struck Fanny at once, for she said, "Something's going to happen, isn't it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you're too civil to last."

"Do you think so?"

"I'm sure of it. It's wonderful

"I told you I felt jolly to-day."

"So it seems," replied Fanny, regarding him a little suspiciously.

They reached the water-side, and embarked in Wormald's outrigger-gig, took Stoffles over to the other side, where the towing-path was, and giving him the rope, made him, for the time being, a beast of burden. They had a pleasant journey up to the first lock, and Fanny was graciously pleased to declare that she liked towing ever so much better than rowing or sculling. "It's better fun," she said.

"So I think," replied Wormald, who was the picture of luxurious contentment.

"I hate to see a fellow pulling himself red in the face," said Fanny. "He can't talk to you, because the exercise takes his wind."

"Naturally. It's hard work."

"Then I think towing an improvement upon it."

"You don't seem to care for the beggar on the bank?"

"Not I; it's good for him.

"Here we are, at the lock," Wormald observed.

"Is that the lock?"

"Yes. Will you go through, or shall I land you, and pick you up again afterwards?"

"Oh, I'm not afraid; I'll go through."

"Very well."

"Are those boats going through?"

"I think they are."

Fanny pointed to three boats, which were waiting in the lock-cut for admission.

Wormald steered the boat into the bank, and Stoffles threw the towing-line into the bows, afterwards pushing her off. Wormald then took out the sculls, and rowed gently up to the lock-gates, which were revolving on their hinges.

Altogether, there were four boats in the lock. Turning to Fanny, Wormald said, "Do you like a chorus?"

"Yes, if it's a rattling good one."

"I know one you would like: shall I sing it, and set those fellows off?"

"Oh, yes, do."

"All right."

When the water began to rise, and the sides of the lock were calculated to give out a good echo, he began, in a rich, clear voice:

"Slap, bang!
Set him up again,
Set him up again,
Set him up again.
Slap, bang!
Set him up again,
Upon a summer's day.

Right in the middle of the bungalow,
The bungalow,
The bungalow;
R-right in the middle of the bungalow,
Upon a summer's day.
Slap, bang!
Set him up again,
Set him up again,
Upon a summer's day."

There were some men in flannels in a four-oar, to whom the chorus seemed familiar, and they entered into the spirit of it with great zest, giving peculiar effect to

"R-right in the middle of the bungalow,
The bungalow,
The bungalow."

Fanny was much pleased, for when the ringing voices of half a dozen men were engaged in singing the nonsense-verses, the effect was undeniably fine.

"I like that," she said; "where did you pick it up?"

"Oh! I don't know exactly. Fellows pick up things, they hardly know how."

"Let us have something to drink."

"Already?"

"Yes; I'm thirsty."

"What will you have?"

"What have you brought with you?"

"Some shandy-gaff in a stone-bottle, and some sparkling wine in the hamper behind you; and I think there is some soda in that fish-basket."

"Oh, give us some fiz!"

Wormald did as he was told, and opened a bottle

of wine. The nose of the boat was on a level with the lock-side, and Dick Stoffles was stooping down to pick up the towing-rope again. Having done so, he stood with it in his hand and looked at Frank Wormald, hoping that some of the sparkling beverage might come to his share.

Fanny held the glass while Wormald poured out the wine. As he was doing so, he said, "Was that a rabbit going through that hedge?"

"Where?"

"To the left of you."

"I don't see it."

"It's gone now."

She had turned her head round, and during the brief space thus occupied something had occurred to alarm Dick Stoffles, for he suddenly quitted his position, and darting forward, took the glass rudely from his daughter's hand and emptied its contents into the lock.

Wormald turned a shade paler.

Fanny looked up with openly-expressed indignation in her face.

"What did you do that for?" she exclaimed.

"What the devil do you mean by such impertinence, my good fellow?" said Wormald.

"Only this," replied Stoffles; "the wine was poisoned."

"Poisoned!" echoed Fanny.

"Yes; I saw him drop something into it."

"Is this true?"

"I swear it," replied Dick Stoffles.

Fanny trembled all over.

"You hear what he says," exclaimed Fanny to Wormald. "Why don't you contradict him?"

"I'll break every bone in the lying rascal's skin."

"No, you won't, master," said Dick Stoffles, standing firmly on his legs, with his fists doubled.

"D— you," said Fanny; "I believe him. It's all true enough. You want to get rid of me, and so you tried to poison me; that was why you were so civil to me. But you are sold, you see; and I shall look out for you in future."

"I tell you, it's an infamous invention."

"Not it."

"He deserves to be hanged."

"*You* do!"

"Fanny!"

"Don't talk to me; I shall get out and walk home. I'm not going to stop with a poisoning brute like you. You are as bad as Palmer. I could imprison you for life for it, and I don't know that I shall not."

Dick Stoffles extended his hand, and assisted his daughter out of the boat.

Wormald looked at Dick Stoffles in a wicked manner, and said, in a sibilant whisper, "I'll square this little day's work with you, my fine fellow!"

"I'm not afraid of you," replied Dick Stoffles.

Fanny walked hastily along the towing-path, and crossing the ferry, went home by herself, leaving Dick Stoffles and Wormald to fight it out amongst themselves, and follow when they liked.

Rose met her at the garden-gate, and said, "Oh, how pale you look!"

"Enough to make me."

"Has any thing happened?"

"Come in, and give me some brandy, and I'll tell you," replied Fanny.

"What is it?" said Rose; "nothing dreadful, I hope."

"I think it is very dreadful. That beast of a man of mine has tried to poison me!"

"No!"

"He has, though; and if it hadn't been for Dick Stoffles, he'd have done it too."

"He's a rank bad 'un, ma'am," replied Rose; "but do you think he really meant it?"

"Of course; there's no doubt about it."

"Well, I never!"

"Something must be done, Rose."

"Yes, ma'am."

"I can't go on leading this life, and I won't!" exclaimed Fanny passionately. "He might kill me in my sleep. You don't know what those desperate villains may do. I always knew he was bad, but I never thought he was so bad as he has proved himself."

"Nor I, ma'am," replied Rose.

"Shall we leave here, Rose, and go back to the crescent?"

"I wish we could; we're all of us buried alive here."

"Well, I'll think it over," said Fanny. "Give me some more brandy."

CHAPTER XXII.

SHE WAS A WIDOW.

WHEN Wormald was left alone with Dick Stoffles, he sprang out of the boat, and, to the surprise of the lock-keeper, seized his father-in-law by the collar of his coat. The lock-keeper was a fair specimen of his kind, and active in his business—when it suited him. He grumbled about pleasure-boats, and cursed barges in his heart, wishing that every one had a hole stove in its bottom which would sink it below the surface. He had nothing to do with keeping the peace, so he refrained from interfering, more especially as Wormald was a strong and formidable-looking man, wearing a ferocious look ; and he surmised that, with the usual luck of peace-makers, and those-who interpose in quarrels, he might wipe an injured nose.

“Why do you interfere in my affairs?” Wormald fiercely demanded.

“Leave go of my collar, and don't shake the wind out of a fellow, and then I'll tell you,” replied Stoffles.

Wormald relaxed his hold, but did not altogether release him.

“That's better !” said Stoffles, able to breathe with less difficulty, and in no immediate danger of suffocation.

“Speak out !” said Wormald.

“Give me time. You won't deny you put poison in that glass ?”

"Yes, I will, and do."

"Well, if you do tell a what-d'ye-call-it, there's nothing like sticking to it," Stoffles replied.

"What was it to you," Wormald asked, "supposing what you say to be true?"

"A great deal!"

"That's no answer."

"What sort of an answer do you want?" replied Stoffles, still fencing with the question.

"A straightforward one."

"It is."

"You are shuffling with me!" Wormald exclaimed impatiently, while he tightened his hold on Stoffles's collar.

"Come, drop that, guv'nor," Stoffles gurgled through his choking throat. "Drop that, and we'll have it out fair and square, in a friendly way."

"Make haste, then."

"Now, look here," began Stoffles, "it isn't natural for a father to see his child hurt."

"A father!"

"Yes; is it?"

"I can't say it is."

"Of course you can't, nor nobody else."

"What has that to do with you?"

"Suppose it's a daughter?"

"Well?"

"And you're fond of—dead nuts on her, I may say."

"Yes."

"You wouldn't like to see her put out of the way by a d— fellow, for whom she's too good!"

"Do you mean—"

"I'll tell you what I mean, sir ; I saw you trying to poison *my* daughter."

"Nonsense !"

"She is, though ; and if you don't let me go, you'll be murdering of your father-in-law."

"Oh, my God !" exclaimed Wormald, letting the man go, and recoiling a step or two, as if he had inadvertently come in contact with something which was unclean.

"You needn't be so cock-a-hoop, master," Dick Stoffles said, feeling a little hurt at the openly-expressed aversion he could read in Wormald's face.

"This is indeed the crowning blow !" Wormald murmured.

He was a proud man, and it broke his heart to think that he had allied himself to Fanny, and bound himself to her and her relations. Another blow was in store for him. He all at once remembered the letter he had read when at the crescent, and he said, with blanched cheeks, "What is your name ?"

"Stoffles, if it's any satisfaction to you "

"What else ?"

"Dick."

"Have you ever been in gaol ?"

"So you've got that against me, eh ?" said Dick savagely.

"Answer me !"

"Yes, I have."

"How did you get out ?" continued Wormald imperiously.

"Stoffles approached him with meekness and

submission in his glance, and treading softly on tip-toe : " Perhaps my time's up," he said in a whisper.

" I know that to be false !"

" Well, never mind ; don't talk loud. Some one might hear us, and the Blues are always ready to spot a fellow who has tried on the flying caper with them, and given them leg-bail."

" So you are an escaped convict ?" Wormald said.

" If you know, what's the good of asking ?" replied the man sullenly.

There was a wild glance in Wormald's eyes as he said :

" Go to your daughter, and say, that I wish her joy of her felon-parent."

" Don't say nothing !"

" Be off. I don't want to hold any more conversation with you."

Dick Stoffles slunk sullenly away, and Wormald, still with the semi-maniacal glare flashing from his expressive eyes, walked over the bridge at the lock-gates to the lock-keeper, who had watched this interesting scene, but without being able to catch a word of what was said. Wormald knew the man well, having passed through the lock so often since he had been a resident at Ingarwick.

" Have you a fowling-piece you could lend me ?" he said.

" I think I have, sir."

" Any thing will do."

" Heard of any thing up the river, sir ?"

" No ; just going to pepper the rats, that's all."

"I'll go and get the gun for you, sir," exclaimed the lock-keeper, trotting off on his mission. When he returned, Wormald gave him a sovereign, saying he would ask him for the change another time. The man made a note of the remark, and mentally resolved that he would ever afterwards be without that useful commodity. He pushed the boat off, and Wormald, with the gun lying by his side, sculled slowly up the river.

Dick Stoffles did as his daughter had done, and walked along the towing-path until he came to the ferry, when he shouted, "Over," at the top of his voice, and was taken across. He made his way through the little village without being accosted by any one, until he reached the police-station, where, to his consternation, he saw a policeman standing on the threshold of the doorway leading into the office. He would have turned round and gone back again, but he felt that the man's eye was upon him, and if that were the case, it would be better and less suspicious to go boldly on. Accordingly he did so. He passed the station, and quickening his pace, was congratulating himself upon having made a clever escape, when a harsh voice behind him exclaimed: "My man!"

He hastened on, pretending that he did not hear the exclamation, or that he did not think he was the party addressed.

"Hi!" sounded in his ear.

Still he took no notice.

"Stop!" vociferated the same voice.

Bursting into a cold perspiration all over, he did

so; for it would have been useless to run. Calming himself as well as he was able, he put a bold front on the matter, and said, in a voice as firm as he could make it :

“ Who are you holloaing at ? ”

“ You, my good fellow,” returned the policeman, who was a tall, strapping fellow, and a formidable antagonist.

“ Here I am, then.”

“ Come here.”

“ All right. Any thing to oblige you.”

Stoffles retraced his steps, and said, as he confronted the policeman :

“ Now, what is it ? ”

“ I want to ask you a few questions.”

“ Go ahead.”

“ Do you live here ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Where ? ”

“ Up at Mr. Wormald’s. I’m his wife’s father.”

“ Oh ! He’s proud of you, I should think ! ”

“ Don’t see why he shouldn’t be,” returned Stoffles, trembling with apprehension.

“ Where did you come from last ? ”

“ London.”

“ Oh ! Were you ever on the tramp ? ”

“ Never.”

“ Never been to Portsmouth, I suppose ? ”

“ Don’t know it.”

“ What’s your name ? ”

“ Smith.”

“ Did you ever hear of Dick Stoffles, *alias* The

Macer?" This was the name his companions had given him at Portsmouth.

"No," replied Dick, clenching his fists, and preparing for a struggle.

"Oh, you haven't!" exclaimed the policeman. "That's a pity, for we want him. It strikes me you bear a resemblance to him; you wouldn't make a bad substitute on a pinch."

"You're fond of your jokes."

"Step inside, will you?"

"Thank you, I'd rather not."

"Then I shall use a little gentle coercion," said the policeman.

"You're not on duty," Stoffles exclaimed, as he noticed that the policeman did not wear his cuff.

"I'll risk that," returned the man, who whistled in a peculiar manner. Three of his friends and fellow-officers emerged from the station-house, and Dick Stoffles saw that he was fairly caught.

"Up a gum-tree at last!" he muttered.

The next moment he was holding out his hands for the "darbies" to be put round his wrists.

"We have some one inside who can identify you," said one of the captors.

"Who is that?" inquired Stoffles, who, in spite of his ill-luck, evinced some curiosity.

"Come and see; we haven't had him long. He tumbled into our hands quite promiscuous, like yourself, only we keep our eyes open down at Ingarwick, which is more than they do at all places.

Dick Stoffles was ushered into a cell, where, on a hard bench, half-asleep, half-awake, looking thin, ill,

and emaciated, with hollow, sunken cheeks, and lack-lustre eyes, he saw Gentleman Barton. At first he could hardly believe the evidence of his senses.

Barton looked up, and smiling a faint recognition, said, "Run to earth at last, you see!"

"Worse luck."

"I've had a hard time of it," he continued. "It hasn't been altogether a bed of roses for me, Dick. They advertised and offered rewards. I've been on tramp from place to place. They ran the reward for me up to five hundred pounds, and I know there was not one of my old pals but what would sell me for that—not one. I've been hunted till I'm sick of my life."

"It's no good crying over spilled milk. Let's be as jolly as we can, Barton," exclaimed Stoffles; "we're in for it, and they can't hang us. I mean to try my luck in Australia when I get out; and they can't keep us for ever. Here, Bobby, take this half-skiv, and if you're any thing like a right screw, you'll bring some liquor. We're two swells out of luck, and feel rather dry."

The policeman took the money, and in five minutes the two men were carousing in a half-hearted way.

The wheel of fortune had revolved, and Barton was at the bottom of it. I wonder if he thought of Milly, and the cross on the grave in the little sea-side cemetery?

* * * * *

"Oh, mum !" exclaimed Rose, rushing into the cottage out of breath.

"What's the matter ?" asked Fanny.

"They've got him !"

"Got who ?"

"The old man—Mr. Stoffles !"

"Have they ? a good job too ! I'm sure I don't care !" she returned heartlessly.

"It was his own fault, I suppose ?"

"Of course it was ; he should have taken more care of himself."

"Will they take him to prison again ?"

"Yes, and keep him there, I hope. I'm sure I don't want to be bothered with him."

Half an hour afterwards there was a confused noise outside the door ; many people were heard talking in a low tone, and Rose, opening the door, saw four men carrying something on a shutter. She took one hurried glance at it, and exclaimed, in a terrified tone, "It's master !"

"Yes, blowed up with his own gun, they do say, which it bust," explained one of the crowd.

"What is all this ?" said a voice at Rose's elbow.

Fanny had come to the door, and was not long in discovering the body of Wormald. His face was calm and placid. A piece of canvas had been placed over the region of the heart, for it was there that the charge of shot had entered. Much shocked, Fanny retreated into the sitting-room, and hid her face in her hands.

She was a widow !

* * * * *

The sun was shining upon the old-fashioned, old-world crescent with its accustomed serenity. The air was fresh and balmy, although it blew off the river. There had been some heavy rain, which heralded the termination of autumn and the approach of winter.

Mrs. Wormald was sitting near the fire-place, looking interesting in those weeds which are becoming to a widow. Rose was standing by her side; and both mistress and maid appeared to be in the act of deciding a weighty question.

"Now, what do you think, Rose?" Mrs. Wormald exclaimed.

"I really don't know," replied Rose, not throwing much light upon the question by her answer.

"We must do something."

"Yes."

"I am tired of a fast life."

"So am I," said Rose, trying to look demure and modest.

"You are all right."

"Yes. You see, there's the chemist at the corner," Rose said hesitatingly.

"I suppose you will leave me when you get married?"

"No, I won't," Rose cried energetically.

"He will want you to start in some trade."

"He'll have to do what I wish," replied Rose, or—

"Or what?"

"I'll lead him a life!"

Fanny laughed, and said:

"Some people take houses, and put a bit of furniture in them."

"And let lodgings?"

"Exactly."

"I don't think we should like that," Rose said. "There's nothing but latch-keys, and coming home at all hours, and cooking and trapesing about."

"So there is."

"Can't you think of something else?"

"It's a toss-up with me whether I don't take a 'public.'"

"Ah, that's the thing!" cried Rose rapturously.

"Always plenty to drink, and nothing to pay for it," said Fanny sententiously.

"And the best of every thing."

"A good road-side tavern, eh, Rose?"

"I'd rather have it in town."

"Would you?"

"There's more bar-business, and that's the best. In the country it's all parlour and tap-room, and that sort of custom don't pay for the gas after ten o'clock at night."

"You seem to know all about it, Rose."

"I had a uncle as was in the public line," replied Rose.

"Your young man might be barman," exclaimed Fanny, with the air of one who has made a discovery.

"That would be fine."

"Wouldn't it?"

"We should be quite a happy family. Excuse me; but we should see you, ma'am, being cottoned

up to by some swell, and married for the second time."

"No, Rose," replied Fanny, with a sigh; "I don't think I shall ever marry again."

"Don't you be too sure, ma'am. Mr. Right often comes when he's least expected."

Acting upon the resolution she had made, Fanny bought the good-will of a celebrated tavern at one of those delightful resorts where the minute finny prey called whitebait is retailed to hungry travellers from the great City. Before she became its possessor, it had fallen somewhat into disrepute; but under her able and energetic management, it has become a great success.

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